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Thevetia peruviana

[Synonyms : *Cascabela peruviana*, *Cascabela thevetia*, *Cerbera peruviana*, *Cerbera thevetia*, *Thevetia linearis*, *Thevetia neritifolia*, *Thevetia thevetia*]

YELLOW OLEANDER is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native to tropical America it has small slightly fragrant, orange or yellow flowers.

It is also known as *Ashvaha* (Sanskrit), Bastard oleander, Be-still tree, Exile oil plant, Exile tree, French willow, *Gelber Oleander* (German), Good luck tree, *Karibischer Oleander* (German), *Kolka-phul* (Bengali), Lucky bean, Lucky nut, Lucky seed, Milk bush, *Pachaiyalari* (Tamil), *Pachchaganeru* (Telugu), *Pachchararali* (Malayalam), *Pila kaner* (Hindi), *Schellenbaum* (German), Thevetia, Tiger apple, and Trumpet flower.

Warning – the sap in the whole plant (and the seeds) is poisonous in excess and can cause abdominal pain, gastroenteritis, vomiting, a slow and weak pulse, cardiac abnormalities and death. It can also cause skin inflammation. It is poisonous for animals.

Peruviana means ‘of or from Peru’.

In Hawaii yellow oleander is considered to have made a significant contribution to accidental fatal or near-fatal poisonings whether of man or domestic animal. It has also been used however with grim intent. The French botanist, Clusius (1525-1609) was one of the many Europeans who noted that local Middle American Indian tribes used yellow oleander in criminal poisonings. And after its introduction to south-eastern Asia many writers have contended that the leaf juice was used by tribes in some countries in that region as a dart poison for hunting.

The seeds are strung into necklaces and are also used to decorate ornaments.

Flowers are used in India in religious ceremonies.

Medicinally, the bark is used locally to treat fever. A seed paste is employed in India for some skin diseases and as an anti-malarial aid in western Africa. It is also used to cause vomiting in India, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. Some claims are now beginning to be made that yellow oleander could be helpful in treating some heart disease.