

Zanthoxylum americanum

[Synonyms : *Fagara fraxinifolia*, *Kampmania fraxinifolia*, *Pseudopetalon glandulosum*, *Thylax fraxineum*, *Xanthoxylum americanum*, *Xanthoxylum catesbianum*, *Xanthoxylum clava-herculis*, *Xanthoxylum fraxineum*, *Xanthoxylum fraxinifolium*, *Xanthoxylum glandulosum*, *Xanthoxylum ramiflorum*, *Zanthoxylum americanum* forma *americanum*, *Zanthoxylum aromaticum*, *Zanthoxylum carolinianum*, *Zanthoxylum fraxineum*, *Zanthoxylum fraxinifolium*, *Zanthoxylum macrophyllum*, *Zanthoxylum mite*, *Zanthoxylum parvum*, *Zanthoxylum ramiflorum*, *Zanthoxylum tricarpum*]

PRICKLY ASH is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to eastern North America it has small greenish-yellow flowers.

It is also known as American prickly ash, *Amerikanskt pepparträd* (Swedish), Angelica tree, Angelica tree of America, Common prickly ash, *Hakasits* (Pawnee North American Indian), Northern prickly ash, *Piikkisaarni -laji* (Finnish), Suterberry, Toothache bush, Toothache tree, and Yellow wood.

Americanum means ‘of or from America (North or South)’.

Apparently the aromatic fruit were used by young men of the Omaha North American Indian tribe as a perfume.

In contrast the Pawnee tribe used the fruit in veterinary medicine to treat their horses – and Creek Indians rubbed a bark infusion on their hunting dogs’ noses to enhance their scent detection qualities.

The name Toothache tree came from a North American Indian practice of chewing the bark to ease toothache. Although used by many, including the Iroquois, Meskwaki, Alabama and Comanche Indians it is likely however that the ‘cure’ was actually the substitution of one pain or irritant for another.

Menominee Indians flavoured some of their medicines with an infusion of the fruit, but the plant was itself a source of various medicines for many of the North American Indian tribes as well. It was a cough remedy for the Meskwaki and Chippewa Indians, the Cherokee and Menominee tribes viewed it as a cold cure, and both the Comanche and Chippewa used it to ease sore throats. The latter also used it to treat some lung problems – and the Iroquois and Meskwaki Indian tribes valued it as a treatment for tuberculosis. Iroquois Indians used it on the one hand as an agent for causing vomiting and on the other as a potion that would ease vomiting. They also used it to treat some female ailments, back pain, cramps and worms, and they prescribed it for abortion too. It was used to ease fever by the Comanche Indians, and the Mohican and Delaware tribes turned to it as a treatment for some heart disorders. While the Iroquois and Meskwaki Indians used it for kidney problems, the Potawatomi and Iroquois tribes used it to treat venereal diseases. For the Menominee it was a sedative, and some of the Delaware took it as a tonic. Both the Menominee and Cherokee tribes used it to treat rheumatism. It was applied to burns by the Comanche, and the Alabama and Menominee Indians applied it to various skin disorders. Some Indian tribes also used the plant as a stimulant and it was this that drew prickly ash to the notice of orthodox Western medicine.

Medicinally, the bark has been used to treat rheumatism, skin diseases, stomach and digestive disorders, typhoid, fevers generally, ulcers, poor circulation and healing wounds. Apart

from anything else the berries have provided an ingredient in a tonic. Today it is employed primarily in local folk medicine. [Prickly ash is sometimes used as an alternative to garden angelica (*Angelica archangelica*).]