

## Candle Nut Tree



Photo courtesy of Banana Tree / [www.bananatree.com](http://www.bananatree.com)  
*Aleurites moluccana* [Euphorbiaceae]

Text by Armando González-Stuart, Ph.D.

**Other common names:** Indian walnut, Kukui, Tuitui

**Common names in Spanish:** Nuez de la India, Palo de la India

**Where is it found?** The tree is originally from Indonesia, but is now cultivated in South America, especially in Brazil. Some ads mention that this tree is native to the Amazon region, which is incorrect.

**Part(s) of the plant used:** The fruits and leaves of this plant are used in traditional Asian medicine for the treatment of headache, morning sickness, fever, inflammation, gonorrhea, and to lower cholesterol (Pedrosa et al., 2002; Ostraff et al., 2000). *Aleurites moluccana* extracts showed anti-bacterial activity against *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (Locher et al., 1995).

The seeds have recently been touted as having various therapeutic properties, but no clinical trials have been undertaken in humans to evaluate their potential beneficial or toxicological effects.

**How is it used?** Some ads mention that a very small portion (approximately  $\frac{1}{8}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$ ) of the seed should be boiled in water prior to taking it before bedtime. However, since no exact dose has been specified, it may be difficult to measure exactly how much of the seed will actually be ingested.

**What is it used for?** Some commercial ads on the Internet claim the seeds of the plant can help in weight loss, as well as to lower cholesterol. Some sites also mention the seed is useful for a

great variety of conditions including arthritis, baldness, cellulite, constipation, hemorrhoids, to improve skin conditions, as an appetite suppressant, and as an aid to stop cravings for tobacco (smoking cessation).

Experiments with rabbits have shown that rinsing the eyes with marine solution followed by treatment with a mixture of plant oils extracted from *A. moluccana* and *Callophylum inophyllum* is a promising treatment for ocular burns (Said et al., 2009).

The candle nut tree may very well have promising medicinal value, but more research in humans is needed before it can be safely recommended.



### **Safety / Precautions**

Currently, there are no known clinical studies in humans to verify the various health claims made by some commercial companies which market candle nut tree seeds.

Since the seeds can have a drastic purgative action (Wagstaff, 2008; Nelson et al., 2007; Hocking, 1997), they should not be used without supervision from a health professional, especially in patients with colitis (inflammation of the large intestine), or IBS (irritable bowel syndrome).

Also, no toxicological studies have been made in order to establish the possible side effects of taking the seeds for prolonged periods of time.

Patients suffering from any form of liver, heart or kidney disease should best avoid taking this product.

Avoid during pregnancy and lactation, as well as in small children, and the elderly. Some people may be allergic to the seeds of this plant.



**Before you decide to take any medicinal herb or herbal supplement, be sure to consult with your health care professional first. Avoid self-medication: Always be on the safe side!**

## References

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