

Fijian Medicinal Plants

Fijian name: Tavola

English name: Beach Almond Tree

Botanical name: *Terminalia catappa*

- The Tavola tree grows near the beach but can be found inland as well.
- It grows into a very tall tree with one main trunk from which the branches stand straight out, like an umbrella.
- The leaves are large and pear shaped, dull green in colour which turn gold and red before falling from the tree making them completely bare, once a year.
- Mainly used as a general tonic or pick-me-up after illness and commonly given to children who are lethargic.
- Headaches and migraine may be remedied by squeezing the juice of the leaf into the nostrils.
- The leaves may also be chewed and their juice swallowed as the treatment of a simple cough, and can be applied directly to aid healing of wounds and burns.
- The Tavola seed is edible, but you must get through the fibrous outer layers before finding the kernel inside.
- The kernel is delicious roasted and can be used as a substitute for pine nuts in pesto.



Fijian name: Quwawa

English name: Guava

Botanical name: *Psidium guajava*

- The guava tree has become an invasive species in Fiji and you can find one almost anywhere. It is commonly used to treat diarrhea and dysentery.
- The juice of the leaves can also be used in treatment of coughs and stomach ache. The juice can be squeezed into salt water and used to treat tooth aches.
- The young leaves are pounded and soaked in water to make a drink, or, the leaves can be chewed and the juice swallowed, spitting out the dry remains.
- Sometimes you may find that if you eat too many of the fruit, especially green; you end up with constipation or a very sore tummy.



Fijian name: Wa Bosucu

English name: Mile-a-minute

Botanical name: Mikania micrantha

- Called by this name because that is just what it does given half the chance.
- It can cover and ruin a garden in a very short space of time. Has rather pointy leaves and when in flower has clumps of very small white blossoms.
- The juice of the leaves may be used for the treatment of wounds and is valued as a remedy to stop bleeding, including nose bleeds. Crush up the leaves in your palms and apply directly to the wound.
- Also great to apply to stings of any sort.



Fijian name: Vau

English name: Beach hibiscus

Botanical name: Hibiscus tiliaceus

- Very common by the seaside, the Vau has many uses, not only medicinal. Has heart shaped papery leaves and yellow or dark red flowers very much like hibiscus bloom.
- The stringy bark can also be used for rope.
- For sprained limbs, the leaves are placed over the swelling and strapped on overnight.
- By the next morning the swelling has usually disappeared and the limb is massaged with oil, to strengthen it. This treatment works surprisingly well.



Fijian name: Totodro

English name: Penny Royal

Botanical name: Centella asiatica

- This is a ground creeper that has leaves very similar to a violet, which are small and round with crinkly edges.
- The leaves have antiseptic as well as antimicrobial properties.
- Leaves can be used to stop bleeding of wounds by acting as a clotting agent and are also pounded up and the juice drunk for severe stomach ache and/or period pains.



Fijian name: Botebote Koro

English name: Goat Weed

Botanical name: Ageratum conyzoides

The leaves of this plant have antiseptic properties. The crushed leaves help to stop bleeding (of wounds) by encouraging clotting. The leaves are also crushed and used as a poultice for boils, sores and swollen feet. Essential oils from this plant have been shown to demonstrate antibacterial properties against a certain strain of bacterium, staphylococcus aureus. The plant has also shown anti-fungal and anti-inflammatory properties



Fijian name: Moli

English name: Lemon tree

The leaves can be used for tea. The tender leaves can be chewed or juiced to help with coughs or irritation of the throat.



Musa family (banana and plantain)

Jaina Leka

This is a dwarf banana plant known for its small fragrant fruit. Liquid pressed from the young leaves is used in the treatment of painful urination with small flow. It is also used as a remedy for swelling behind the ears, for stomach ache and to relieve fever. The flowers can be used to treat diabetes.



English name: Lion's tongue or Mother-in-law's tongue

Botanical name: Sansevieria

The leaves are heated and the juice is squeezed out and applied to an ear infection to help ease ear ache.



Fijian name: Kura

English name: Indian Mulberry

Botanical name: Morinda citrifolia

- It is found in India, Fiji and other Polynesian islands. Liquid is pressed and snuffed into the nostrils to treat bad breath and a raspy voice. A preparation made by pounding and straining the young fruit is applied directly to mouth ulcers and hemorrhoids. It is also used to treat hernia.
- Pain caused by the barbs of poisonous fish such as stone fish and stingray, may be relieved by holding the affected area in the steam of boiling leaves. To aid the removal of splinters, a leaf is held over the cut.
- Fluid squeezed from the root is mixed with water and applied to boils while liquid pressed from the leaf is used as a rinse for eye injury and eye infections.
- The fruit is used in the treatment of diabetes



Fijian Names : walaki, qalo, wasila

Botanical name: Flagellariaceae

- High climbing plant with solid stems and conspicuous leaf
- tendrils. Flowers small, white; Fruit is small and fleshy
- A common forest climber which climbs over shrubs and smaller
- trees in wet to dry forest.
- Antimicrobial; used as a diuretic.
The leaves are crushed and the liquid drunk for stomach upsets



English name: Egg Plant

Botanical name: Solanum melongena

Leaves are used for cuts



Fijian name: Via

English Names: Giant taro, Elephant ear

Botanical name: Alocasia

- The young leaves and sap of the stem are used to treat boils and earache
- Swollen lymph glands are treated with the roots. The wood is used to treat stomachache and diarrhoea.



Fijian name: Maoli, Weleti

English name: Papaya / Paw paw

Botanical name: Carica papaya

- This is the common papaya/paw paw tree cultivated for its delicious fruit found throughout the tropics.
- A mouthwash made from scrapings of the inner bark is given for tooth aches.
- The juice of the stem is applied directly to boils. A poultice can be made from the bark.
- Sap squeezed from the stem can be applied to wounds.
- The leaves and seeds can be used by cancer patients; also for asthma and diabetes



Fijian name: Mago

English name: Mango

Botanical name: Mangifera indica

- The inner bark is scraped and the pressed juice is given for a bad cough
- Pressed juice from the root helps in cases of diarrhea



Fijian name: Thevunga

English Name: Red Ginger

Botanical names: Alpinia purpurata; Zingiberaceae

The fruit is used to treat sores.



References:

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