

## *Wrightia tinctoria* (Roxb.) R. Br.

Common names: Pala indigo, Sweet indrajao

Sanskrit name: Stri Kutaja

Malayalam names: Aiyappala, Adukomba, Dhanthappala, Irumpala, Kambippala, Kotakappala, Neelappala, Thattan-chavana, Thinnamppala, Thondappala, Vettupala

Tamil names: Vetpalai, Vapaalai, Veppalai, Veypale, Nilapalai, Irumpaalai, Sonaivetpalai, Thonthapalei

Hindi names: Dudhi, Karayaja

### Description

Deciduous trees; up to 15 m; bark 8-10 mm thick, grey, smooth; latex milky white. Leaves simple, opposite, distichous, 3.5-11 x 2-4 cm, oblong-lanceolate or elliptic-ovate, apex acuminate or caudate acuminate, base acute, margin entire, glabrous, glaucous beneath, chartaceous; petiole 2-5 mm long, stout, glabrous. Flower white, scented, in terminal cymes appearing along with new leaves; pedicel 1.5 mm long, bracts 2, minute. Calyx lobes 5, with membranous margin, 2 mm, ovate, obtuse, ciliate, glandular inside. Corolla salver shaped, lobes 5, broad lobes 12 x 5 mm, oblong, obtuse, throat with 1-2 series of erect, fimbriate corona scales, tube 1.5-2 mm. Stamens 5, inserted on the mouth of the tube, anthers sagittate, spurred at base, conniving and adhering to the stigma; disc absent. Carpels 2, free; ovules many; style filiform, stigma ovoid, usually with a toothed basal ring. Fruit of 2 follicular mericarps, 15-45 cm long, slender, smooth, green, cylindrical, cohering at the tip; seed 16 mm long, black, hairy at one end.

**Distribution:** India, southeast Asia and Australia.

### Uses

**Medicine:** The juice from fresh unripe fruits is used for coagulating milk. The seeds are said to be aphrodisiac and anthelmintic. The leaves are used to relieve toothache when chewed with salt. In Nepal, the milky juice is used to stop bleeding. Also the leaves and roots are pounded in water for treatment of fever. The seeds yield deep

red, semi-drying oil, which has medicinal value. In Indian traditional medicine, the bark and leaves are used to treat psoriasis, stomach pains, toothache, and dysentery.

The leaves are applied as a poultice for mumps and herpes and sometimes, they are also munched to relieve toothache. In folk medicine, the dried and powdered roots of *Wrightia* along with *Phyllanthus amarus* (keezhanelli) and *Vitex negundo* (nochi) is mixed with milk and orally administered to women for improving fertility. The bark and seeds are effective against psoriasis and non-specific dermatitis. It has anti-inflammatory and anti-dandruff properties and hence is used in hair oil preparations.

**Timber:** The timber is white, which is very fine, is used for turnery, carving, toy making, matchboxes, small boxes and furniture.

**Dye:** The leaves, flowers, fruits and roots is a sources of indigo-yielding glucoside, which produces a blue dye or indigo like dye.

**Soil improver:** The branches are trampled into the puddle soil in rice field for green manuring. Intercropping: It's a good agroforestry species as it intercrops well.

