

186 *JATROPHA CURCAS* L. (EUPHORBIACEAE) — Physic Nut, Purging Nut

According to Ochse, "the young leaves may be safely eaten, steamed or stewed."¹⁸³ They are favored for cooking with goat meat, said to counteract the peculiar smell. Though purgative, the nuts are sometimes roasted and dangerously eaten. In India, pounded leaves are applied near horses' eyes to repel flies. The oil has been used for illumination, soap, candles, adulteration of olive oil, and making Turkey red oil. Nuts can be strung on grass and burned like candlenuts.³ Gaydou et al. discuss the possibilities of the species as an energy source.¹⁸⁴ Mexicans grow the shrub as a host for the lac insect. Ashes of the burned root are used as a salt substitute.⁴² It has been used for homicide, molluscicide, piscicide, and raticide.³² The latex was strongly inhibitory to watermelon mosaic virus.¹⁸⁵ Bark used as a fish poison.³ In South Sudan, the seed as well as the fruit is used as a contraceptive.³³ Sap stains linen and can be used for marking.⁶

Extracts are used in folk remedies for cancer.⁴ Reported to be abortifacient, anodyne, antiseptic, cicatrizant, depurative, diuretic, emetic, hemostat, lactagogue, narcotic, purgative, rubefacient, styptic, vermifuge, and vulnerary, physic nut is a folk remedy for alopecia, anasarca, ascites, burns, carbuncles, convulsions, cough, dermatitis, diarrhea, dropsy, dysentery, dyspepsia, eczema, erysipelas, fever, gonorrhea, hernia, incontinence, inflammation, jaundice, neuralgia, paralysis, parturition, pleurisy, pneumonia, rash, rheumatism, scabies, sciatica, sores, stomachache, syphilis, tetanus, thrush, tumors, ulcers, uterosis, whitlows, yaws, and yellow fever.^{32,33} Latex applied topically to bee and wasp stings.³ Mauritians massage ascitic limbs with the oil. Cameroon natives apply the leaf decoction in arthritis.³