

68. *CANANGA ODORATA* (Lam.) Hook. f. & Thoms. (ANNONACEAE) — Cananga, Ylang-Ylang

Siamese apply the flower infusion to the body after bathing. Flowers yield essential oils from which the perfume ylang-ylang is obtained on first distillation; second distillation yields an inferior oil, Canaga oil or Macassar oil. Ylang-ylang is considered the “Queen of Perfumes” and is extensively used in fixation of floral perfumes, making oriental attars, and in manufacture of face powders along with vetivert oils and the like, and as a modifier in manufacture of artificial perfumes. Cananga oil has a harsher odor than ylang-ylang, but is more lasting and is used for making hair oils, cheap perfumes, and for scenting soaps. Macassar oil is commonly found in bazaars and is usually a mixture of Cananga oil and coconut oil. With coconut oil and other ingredients, Macassar oil was quite familiar to the well-groomed Victorian and Edwardian male.⁶ An essential oil is also prepared from the leaves. Wood is used in Sri Lanka for packing chests for produce, boxes, wooden shoes, and for turnery. It has been suggested for match sticks. In the Celebes, the bark is beaten into rope. Buccellato¹¹⁶ gives a detailed account of the uses and composition of ylang-ylang.

Medicinally, the oil is used as application for gout, cephalalgia, and ophthalmia. Reported to be carminative, emmenagogue, ylang-ylang is a folk remedy for asthma, boils, diarrhea, headache, malaria, ophthalmia, rheumatism, and stomach ailments.³² Dried flowers are used for malaria in Java.⁵ Seeds have been used externally in the treatment of malaria as well. In Malaya they are prescribed for asthma. In Upper Perak the leaves are rubbed onto itch. Bark is applied to scurf in West Java. The oil has been suggested as a possible substitute for quinine in malaria.⁵

Constituents of ylang-ylang oil include geraniol and linalool esters of acetic and benzoic acids, *p*-cresol methyl ester, cadinene, a sesquiterpene, and a phenol.⁵ Pinen, benzyl alcohol, creosol, eugenol, isoeugenol, *p*-cresol, safrole (carcinogenic), isosafrole, benzyl acetate, methyl benzoate, methyl salicylate, benzylbenzoate, methyl anthranilate, formic acid, acetic acid, valeric acid, benzoic acid, and salicylic acid are also reported.⁷

Toxicity — Colognes, perfumes, and toilet water containing ylang-ylang essential oils can produce dermatitis in sensitized individuals. Ylang-ylang oil has been accepted as an allergen and removed from certain cosmetics.⁶