

284. *PRUNUS LAUROCERASUS* L. (ROSACEAE) — Cherry-Laurel

Evergreen tree or shrub. Leaves are macerated in water and distilled to yield cherry laurel water and standardized to contain 0.1% HCN, which is used as a flavoring and ophthalmic ingredient. This can be redistilled to yield oil of cherry laurel. The most active essence is reserved for perfumery.²⁷ Crushed leaves have been used to prepare the entomologist's killing bottle. Bruised leaves, like those of almond and peach, will deodorize pots and pans of balsam of copaiba or clove oil odors, if grease has first been cut with alcohol.² Fruits are said to be edible but the seeds should be expectorated. The wood is used in carpentry and lathe work.

The leaves and roots are used in folk remedies for scirrhus tumors and ulcerated cancers.⁴ Reported to be anodyne, antispasmodic, antitussive, aromatic, cyanogenetic, narcotic, poison, sedative, and tonic, cherry laurel is a folk remedy for asthma, cancer, cough, dyspepsia, nausea, pertussis, and tumors.^{4,32,33} Homeopathically used for cyanosis, dry throat, pertussis, and spasms.³³

Seeds contain 0.034% HCN and 25 to 30% fatty oil, the oil containing 9.9% palmitic; 1.7% stearic-; 1.8% myristic-, 73.4% oleic-, and 13.2% linoleic-acid. Protein content runs circa 31%, fat content to nearly 45%.²¹ Leaves contain 0.12 HCN, younger leaves containing more than older leaves. Hence, fresh leaves give aroma of bitter almond when mashed.