

235. MYROXYLON BALSAMUM VAR. PEREIRAE (Royle) Harms (FABACEAE) —
Balsam of Peru

Peru balsam, produced by injured trees, exudes from trunk and limbs or is extracted from bark. Peru balsam, not produced in Peru, received its name because it was originally assembled and shipped to Spain from the Port of Callao, Peru. Oil (cinnamein) is used in perfume, cosmetic, and soap industries. Balsam and its essential oil have been used as flavorings for baked goods, candy, chewing gum, gelatin, ice cream, pudding, soft drinks, and syrups. Balsam is an excellent fixative, blending very well into perfumes of the oriental type and floral perfumes of the heavier type. Balsam wood is close-grained, handsomely grained, nearly mahogany in color, but redder, with a pleasant odor, retained for a long time, it takes a good polish, and is highly esteemed for cabinet work. Sometimes cultivated as coffee shade or as an ornamental. At one time balsam was so popular as an incense that papal edicts forbade the destruction of the trees. Seeds are used to flavor aguardiente, a popular Latin American alcoholic beverage.⁴⁰ Balsam fern is used in dental preparation to treat dry socket (postextraction alveolitis). Also, used in feminine hygiene sprays and as a fixative in creams, detergents, lotions, perfumes, and soap.²⁹ Choco Indians use the powdered bark as an underarm deodorant.

Peru balsam used extensively as a local protectant, rubefacient, parasiticide in certain skin diseases, antiseptic, and vulnerary, and applied externally as an ointment, or in alcoholic