

EXCOECARIA AGALLOCHA Linn.

BUTA-BUTA

Local names: *Alipata* (P. Bis.); *batano* (Ilk, Pang.); *bota-bota* (Tag., Bis.); *buta* (Tag.); *buta-buta* (Tag., Pam., Sul.); *dipodata* (C. Bis.); *gumaingat* (Bag.); *himbabau* (Pamp., Bis.); *iingi* (Sbl.); *lipata* (Bik., Bis., Tag.); *lipatang-buhai* (Tag., Sul.); *siak* (Bis.); *blinding tree*, *milky mangrove* (Eng.).

Buta-buta is found along the seashore or in any place reached by salt or brackish water throughout the Philippines. It also occurs in India to Polynesia.

The plant is a tree, usually not more than 8 meters in height. The leaves are alternate, shiny, pointed at the tip and somewhat rounded at the base, elliptic-ovate, oblong-ovate or ovate, and 6 to 12 centimeters long. The flowers are very small and are densely crowded on slender, flowering branches. The male flowers occur on spikes which grow singly on axils of the leaves and are from 5 to 10 centimeters long. The female flowers are borne on branches which are 2 to 3 centimeters long. There are three sepals with a basal gland within, no petals, and three stamens. The fruit which is somewhat rounded, smooth, and about 5 millimeters in diameter is composed of three sections.

The milky juice from the tree is very caustic and poisonous, being said to cause blindness when it touches the eyes, and to blister the skin. This is also the verdict of the Malays, the Javanese, and the Hindus. According to Guerrero, the latex is used in healing obstinate ulcers.

Gimlette mentions the use of smoke from the burning wood for treatment of leprosy in Fiji. Dymock, Warden, and Hooper report that the juice is used in Australia and New Guinea to cure ulcers and leprosy. A decoction of the leaves is given in epilepsy and is also applied to ulcers.

Burkill states that the roots seem less poisonous than the above-ground parts, as, pounded with ginger, they may be serve to make an embrocation for swellings on hands and feet.

Ridley quoting Dr. Lewin, tells us that this plant is used in the composition of arrow poison. It is probably used only as an irritant to increase the rapidity of action.

Burkill asserts that the sap from the bark may cause blindness, and produces blisters on the skin. The latex is used as a fish poison in New Caledonia. He says also that the latex is an adjunct to *Antiaris* sap in making dart-poison. Gimlette records the criminal use of the sap from the trunk, including poisoning of water by means of the dried and powdered leaves.