



# *Anacardium occidentale* L.

## ANACARDIACEAE

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### Synonyms

*Anacardium occidentale* L.: *Acajuba occidentale* (L.) Gaertn.; *Anacardium amilcarianum* E. Machado; *Anacardium curatellaefolium* A. St. Hil.; *Anacardium kuhlmannianum* E. Machado; *Anacardium mediterraneum* Vell.; *Anacardium microcarpum* Ducke; *Anacardium occidentale* var. *americanum* DC.; *Anacardium occidentale* var. *gardneri* Engl. *Anacardium occidentale* var. *indicum* DC.; *Anacardium occidentale* var. *longifolium* Presl.; *Anacardium othonianum* Rizzini; *Anacardium rondonianum* E. Machado; *Anacardium subcordatum* Presl.; *Cassuvium pomiferum* Lam; *Cassuvium reniforme* Blanco.

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## Local Names

**Colombia:** Caujil, Churá, Marañón, Merey; **Peru:** Marañón (Spanish); **English:** Cashew

## Botany and Ecology

Evergreen tree that can go from small to medium, from 1.5 to 10 m (up to 15 m) in height, in its natural habitat and between 12 and 20 m in commercial plantations, with a diameter at breast height of up to 40 cm. Leaves broad, dense, irregularly shaped or globose, extended foliage, more than 10 m in diameter in trees old. Leaves simple and alternate, obovate or elliptical; blade 7–20 cm long by 4–12 cm wide, color matte blue green. Trunk thick, contorted trunk may be relatively straight where there are no winds. It usually branches almost from the base. Very twisted and abundant branches. Outer bark soft, brown or gray with scattered lenticels and rough longitudinal cracks (cracked). Internal bark whitish to brown, thick, bitter, and astringent and contains a milky sap. Flowers small, aromatic greenish or gray flowers with a little pink to reddish tint. The flowers form tops, which together form terminal panicles 11–29 cm long by 4.5–24.5 cm wide. Fruit a drupe 2–4 cm long by 1–2.5 cm wide, gray or brown, suspended at the end of a pedicel elongated and fleshy pear-shaped. Dicotyledonous and reniform seeds; the cotyledons are white and contain a small embryo, surrounded by a hard pericarp. There is a single seed that usually reaches a third of the weight of the fruit. Thick central root and somewhat superficial secondary roots. The species is native to the tropical zone of Brazil. The genus has a primary center of diversity in the Amazon and one secondary school in Plan Alto, Brazil. It extends through all the tropics of the New and the Old World. From the south of Mexico to Peru and Brazil, from Cuba to Trinidad. It is grown in India and Malaysia (Macbride and Weberbauer 1936–1995) (Figs. 1 and 2).

**Fig. 1** *Anacardium occidentale* (Anacardiaceae) fruits, Beni, Bolivia. (Photo R.W. Bussmann and N.Y. Paniagua-Zambrana)



**Fig. 2** *Anacardium occidentale* (Anacardiaceae) fruits, Beni, Bolivia. (Photo R.W. Bussmann and N.Y Paniagua-Zambrana)



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## Local Medicinal Uses

The seeds are used in **Bolivia** to treat toothache, and the leaves and bark are used for diarrhea and stomachache. The bark is also applied for diabetes and kidney infections, and the leaves to remedy liver pain and for skin infections. (Paniagua Zambrana et al. 2017).

In **Colombia**, the bark of the cashew tree is used against diabetes, usually in infusion. This preparation is also used externally in skin diseases, inflammations, thrush, and throat infections. The leaves in decoction, in very minimal doses, are effective in the treatment of scurvy, aphthae, and oral ulcerations. In infusion, the flowers are used as healing, anti-inflammatory and anti-hemorrhagic, as a tonic and revitalizing general, and also as exciting and aphrodisiac. The “fruits” (which are edible) are used as laxatives, expectorants, and anti-flu. The tincture prepared with the cashew nut is used against sexual impotence and against weakness in general, and it has also been used with good results in the treatment of the flu (García Barriga 1975; Patiño 1963; Pérez Arbeláez 1996). The bark is used to treat anemia, calluses, diabetes, and for wound healing; bark and sap are used to treat warts; leaves serve to treat mouth infections, prostate, and scurvy; flowers are used to increase sexual potency, as stimulant and tonic; fruits and seeds are used to enhance memory; fruits serve to treat constipation, flu, and as expectorant; the sap is used to treat acne and skin diseases; seeds are used for general malaise, infertility, and to strengthen the body (Bussmann et al. 2018). **Peru:** Fresh seeds are used for scars, moles, cysts (ingrowing), and skin stains (Bussmann and Sharon 2007, 2015a, b, 2018a, b).

In **Madagascar**, the leaves are used to treat diabetes, hemorrhoids, stomach ulcers, allergies, hepatitis, wounds, incontinence, and anorexia (Randriamiharisoa et al. 2015).

## Local Food Uses

The seeds are widely eaten.

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