

## Fish Poison Tree

India is a wild and dangerous place: Man-eating tigers and leopards (not to mention bears), pythons, malaria-carrying mosquitoes, insane traffic, [canon ball trees](#), and now fish poison trees.

Yesterday I narrowly averted getting killed by one of these canon balls (not really) only to learn that the cool looking fruit I found while jogging later in the day is toxic. Curious about what was inside the lantern shaped fruit I smashed the fruit on rocks. I really went at it, to no avail, so I brought it to our room to open it with a knife. Upon learning about its properties I decided not to proceed, though surely there was no danger in just opening it. I had no intention of eating it, for goodness sake!



## Weeding Wild Suburbia

All About Gardening with California Native Plants

<http://www.weedingwildsuburbia.com>

---

Pretty interesting looking, the pod is light weight and quite tough.



Sharp edges on four sides.

Turns out the capsule is a tough, rubbery mesocarp that [floats in the sea](#), allowing the seeds to disperse along coastal mangroves. The seed can last a up to [15 years](#) and still germinate in far off

## Weeding Wild Suburbia

All About Gardening with California Native Plants

<http://www.weedingwildsuburbia.com>

---

places such as [Anak Krakatau after the Krakatau eruption](#).



If this isn't cool enough, consider the flowers. According to the website of the [National Tropical Botanical Garden](#) in Hawaii:

*The beautiful and fragrant flowers open at night and attract large moths (it is among the plants that host the impressive Atlas Moth) and nectar-feeding bats with their heavy scent. The next morning, the flower stamens are found dissipated beneath the tree crown.*

(Polunin, Ivan. 1987. Plants and Flowers of Singapore.)

And finally, indigenous people had many medicinal uses for the plant including treating [intestinal worms](#), [chronic skin conditions and stomach aches](#). Following up on evidence that the plant was used to treat tumors in remote villages of Kerala, India, a study in 2002 published in the [Journal of Ethnopharmacology](#) found it to have [anti-tumor properties](#) in mice.

Indigenous people also used this plant to [poison fish in tidal pools](#) (hence the common name). Fortunately the toxin does not appear in the fish meat.

## Weeding Wild Suburbia

All About Gardening with California Native Plants

<http://www.weedingwildsuburbia.com>

---



Beside all of that, it is a beautiful tree.



Fish poison tree (*Barringtonia asiatica*), on the right is a lovely tree with a broad crown. Notice the people to left for scale. The deciduous tree on the left is tropical almond tree (to be discussed).