

Medicinal Plants of Guam



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Morinda citrifolia
Ladda', noni

This small tree produces fruits that, when ripe, are considered to have an unpleasant odor by many people. The sectional fruit matures from separate flowers. The roots, flowers, and bark are used medicinally in *āmot maipe* preparations and used to treat cold sores, diarrhea, sprains, and as a general antispasmodic and analgesic. The young fruits are boiled in combination with other plants for pain relief.

Traditional healers in the Pacific use noni as a remedy to treat a broad range of ailments. Recent scientific literature reports hundreds of biologically active phytochemicals in noni fruit.

Photo by Lauren Gutierrez

Yo'āmte, Our Healers

Traditional healers use different preparation methods for herbal concoctions depending upon the plants used and the remedy needed. Two main methods used are:

- **Āmot fresco** is the method of preparing fresh plant parts by pounding, crushing, chewing, or smashing to extract the juice.
- **Āmot maipe** is the method of preparing plant parts by boiling.

Disclaimer: The information provided is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to be used diagnostically.



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Melanolepis multiglandulosa
Ålom

Native to the Pacific, this variety is endemic to the Mariana Islands and can be found on limestone soils and in disturbed areas.

The young leaves and bark are used in åmot fresko preparations. It is considered a detoxifier for the internal organs. The leaves and bark are pounded with additional plants and then the mash is squeezed and the juice is taken by mouth.

Photos by Lauren Gutierrez and Else Demeulenaere



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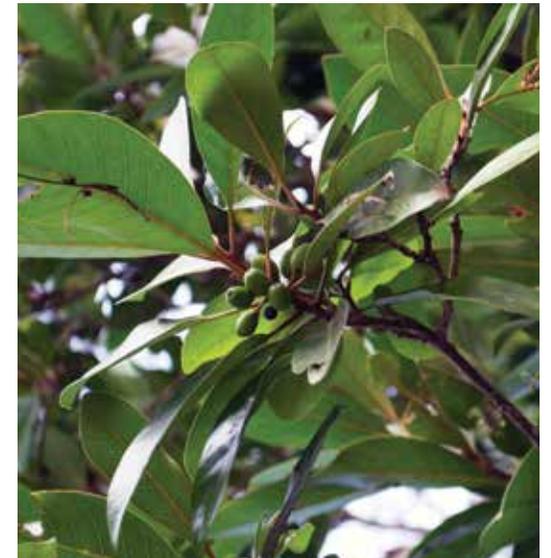


Ficus prolixa
Nunu, banyan

The nunu tree is held in high regard as the resting place of the spirits of the ancestors for CHamoru people. This tree produces many aerial roots from the trunk and branches.

The leaves, banches, and aerial roots exude a milky sap that is used in āmot maipe preparations to stop internal bleeding resulting from injuries. The sap can also be applied directly to external wounds to stop bleeding.

Photos by Else Demeulenaere and Olympia Terral



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Asplenium nidus
Gålak fedda', bird-nest fern

Gålak fedda' is an epiphytal fern found growing on the branches of trees. There are two indigenous bird-nest ferns found in the Mariana Islands.

The juice of the crushed or pounded leaves is used in åmot fresco preparations to stop internal bleeding and as an internal antiseptic. Leaves made into a paste can be used as a poultice for external wounds as well. Roots and leaves are combined with other ingredients as a treatment for stroke.

Photos by Olympia Terral and Else Demeulenaere



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Scaevola taccada
Nanåso, fan flower

Nanåso is very widespread and is commonly found on beaches and in the savannas of Guam. The flowers are unusual in that they look like they were cut in half. The round, fleshy fruits contain one or two seeds that can float.

All parts of the nanåso plant are used in åmot fresco. The young leaves are pounded and the juice is squeezed into babies' mouths to increase appetite. Ripe fruits are squeezed into the eyes to treat tired, dry, or sore eyes.

Photos by Olympia Terral and Lauren Gutierrez



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Ipomoea pes-caprae
Alaihai-tåsi, beach morning glory

The beach morning glory vine is commonly found growing on Guam beaches. The leaves and stems are used in åmot maipe preparations where they are boiled to make a tea for the treatment of chicken pox.

The roots, in combination with other ingredients, are boiled and used to regulate menstrual cycles.

Photos by Olympia Terral



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Artocarpus altilis
Lemmai, seedless breadfruit

The seedless breadfruit came to Guam from Southeast Asia brought by the ancestors of today's CHamoru people. The seeded breadfruit, *Artocarpus marianensis*, is considered endemic to the Mariana Islands.

The midrib of the lemmai leaf is used for åmot fresco. To extract the juice pound the midrib until it is soft. The juice is then squeezed into the eyes as a remedy for pink eye, dry eye, as well as for lacerations of the eyeball.

Photos by Olympia Terral



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Phymatosorus scolopendria
Kahlao, wart fern

Kahlao is found in many habitats in the Marianas. This erect fern boasts beautiful sori on the underside of its leaves.

The leaves and rhizomes are used as an addition to many åmot fresco preparations. It is said to strengthen dental roots and is useful in relieving tonsillitis.

Photos by Lauren Gutierrez and Else Demeulenaere



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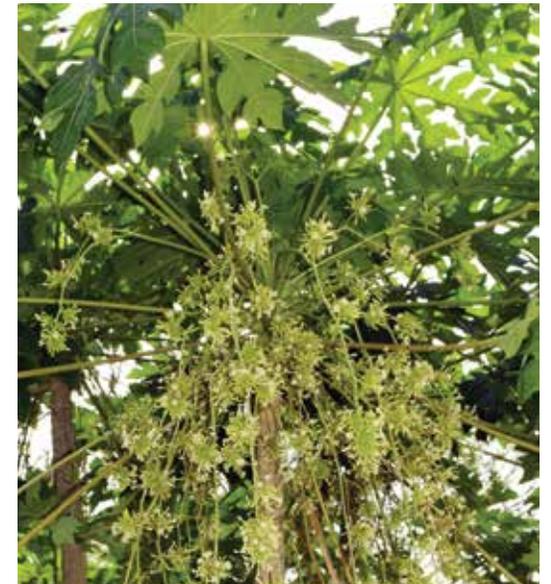


Carica papaya
Papâya

Papâya is a common herbaceous plant found throughout the islands. It is originally from tropical America. Leaves and fruit exude a milky sap which contains papain, a protein used in meat tenderizers.

Ripe fruits are eaten to treat constipation and the seeds contain substances that kill intestinal worms. Fresh leaves are used in poultices as a treatment for boils.

Photos by Olympia Terral



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Talipariti tillaceum
Pågo, sea-hibiscus

Pågo is pan-tropical and although the tree is small, it can form dense, impassable thickets when growing near wetlands. The inner bark is used for ropes, nets, and mats.

The large, yellow flowers, which turn reddish as they die, are used as åmot fresco to treat skin issues such as boils and lesions. The heart-shaped leaves are boiled and combined with additional ingredients to reduce joint and stomach pain.

Photos by Olympia Terral and Else Demeulenaere



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Momordica charantia
Atmagosun hãlom tãno', bitter melon

This indigenous climbing vine, in the cucumber family, grows throughout the tropics. The leaves are used in åmot maïpe preparations where they are boiled then taken as a tea for the treatment of diabetes. The fruit is used to treat leprosy, hypertension, fever, and dysentery.

Scientific studies have shown that the fruits, flowers, roots, and leaves have antiviral and antibacterial properties.

Photos by Else Demeulenaere and Lauren Gutierrez



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Calophyllum inophyllum
Da'ok, Palomaria

This typhoon-resistant tree grows on islands throughout the Pacific with the wood being used for boat and canoe building. It is an excellent shade tree with fragrant flowers and resin.

Da'ok is used in âmot maipe preparations for skin disorders, oil is extracted from the ripe nuts and applied to the skin.

All parts of the plant are considered poisonous and are not to be taken internally.

Photos by Lauren Gutierrez and Else Demeulenaere



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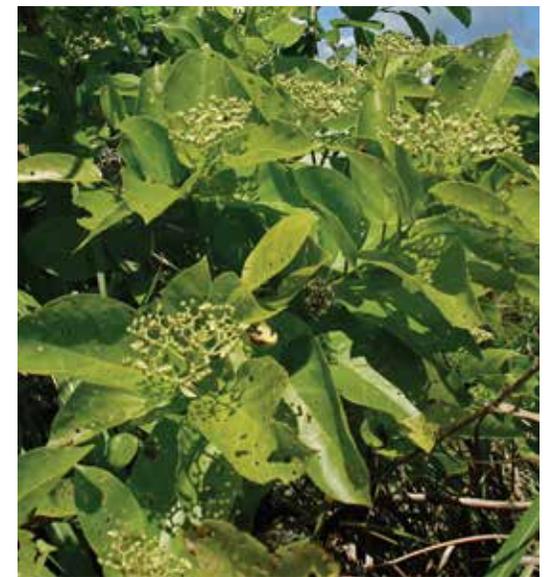


Premna serratifolia
Âhgao, false elder

Âhgao is found on the edges of limestone forests and on sandy soils near beaches. Bees and butterflies are attracted to the flowers. The round fruits change color from green to purple-black when ripe. The wood is hard and durable.

The bark and leaves are used in âmot fresco preparations as a pain reliever for backache and headache. It is also used as remedy for fever.

Photos by Lauren Gutierrez



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