

Inga

This article is about the genus of plant. For other uses, see *Inga* (disambiguation).

Inga (common name *shimbillo*) is a genus of small tropi-



Inga sp. – *MHNT*

cal, tough-leaved, nitrogen-fixing trees^[2] and shrubs, subfamily Mimosoideae. *Inga*'s leaves are pinnate, and flowers are generally white. Many of the hundreds of species are used ornamentally.

Several related plants have been placed into this genus at one time, for example Yopo (Cohoba, Mopo, Nopo or Parica – *Anadenanthera peregrina* – as *Inga niopo*).^[3]

The seeds are covered with sweet white powder. The pulp covering the seeds is lightly fibrous and sweet, and rich in minerals; it is edible in the raw state. The tree's name originates from the Tupi word *in-gá* meaning "soaked", due to the fruit powder consistency.^[4] The tree usually blossoms twice a year.

Within the *Inga* genus there are around 300 species, most of them native and growing in the Amazon forest region although some species are also found in Mexico, Greater and Lesser Antilles and other countries in South America, being an exclusively neotropical genus. The trees are usually found by river and lake edges because their seeds are carried there by floods.

All *Inga* species produce their seeds in "bean-like" pods and some can reach up to 1 m long, in general the pods are 10–30 cm long.

Trees can reach up to 15 metres and they are widely used for producing shade over coffee plants. The plant benefits from well drained soil. The flowers are white with some green and the tree can produce fruits almost all year long.

Inga species, most notably *Inga edulis* (commonly known as "ice-cream-bean" or, in Spanish, "guama" or "guaba" or "paterna") often have edible pulp. The name derives from the fact that those of *I. edulis* resembles vanilla ice cream in flavour.



Fruit of an Inga-species

1 Inga alley cropping

Main article: *Inga* alley cropping

Crop rotation techniques using species of *Inga* such as *I. edulis* have been developed to restore soil fertility, and thereby stem the tide of continual slashing and burning of the rainforest.^{[5][6]} Much of the research was done by Mike Hands at Cambridge University over a 20-year period.^[2]

2 Other uses

Naturopathic medicine suggests that it can be used

- as a syrup for treating bronchitis
- as a tea to aid in healing wounds

3 See also

- List of *Inga* species

4 References

- [1] "USDA GRIN taxonomy:Genus: *Inga* Mill.".
- [2] Elkan, Daniel. "Slash-and-burn farming has become a major threat to the world's rainforest" *The Guardian* 21 April 2004

- [3] "USDA GRIN taxonomy:GRIN Species Records of *Inga*".
- [4] "Significado de ingá (diccionario inFormal)" (in Portuguese).
- [5] Haugen, C., Revelo, N. "Amazon Rainforest Restoration and Conservation in Ecuador: *Inga* spp.". Visited 2006, September 18.
- [6] Elkan, D. (2005, February). "The Rainforest Saver." *The Ecologist*, 35 (1), 56–63.

5 External links

Data related to *Inga* (Fabaceae) at Wikispecies

- *I. Edulis* at FACT Net plain text HTML
- Lost Crops of the Incas: Little-Known Plants of the Andes with Promise for Worldwide Cultivation

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