

Senna alexandrina

Many, see § Names and taxonomy

Senna alexandrina (Alexandrian senna, in Arabic سenna or سنا or سنا سنا and see below) is an ornamental plant in the genus *Senna*. It is used in herbalism. It grows natively in upper Egypt, especially in the Nubian region, and near Khartoum (Sudan), where it is cultivated commercially. It is also grown elsewhere, notably in India and Somalia.

Alexandrian Senna is a shrubby plant that reaches 0.5–1 metres (20" to 40"), rarely two metres (6') in height with a branched, pale-green erect stem and long spreading branches bearing four or five pairs of leaves. These leaves form complex, feathery, mutual pairs. The leaflets vary from 4 to 6 pairs, fully edged, with a sharp top. The midribs are equally divided at the base of the leaflets.

The flowers are in a raceme interior[2] blossoms, big in size, coloured yellow that tends to brown. Its legume fruit are horned, broadly oblong, compressed and flat and contain about six seeds.

When cultivated as medicinal herb, the plants are cut down semi-annually, dried in the sun, stripped and packed in palm-leaf bags. They are then sent on camels to Essouan and Darao, then down the Nile to Cairo or else to Red Sea ports. Trade in senna provides a significant source of income for the nomadic Ababda.

Senna alexandrina is also known under the names Egyptian senna, Tinnevely senna, East Indian senna or the French séné de la palthe.

It received the names Alexandrian senna and Egyptian senna because Alexandria in Egypt was the main trade port in past times. The fruits and leaves were transported from Nubia and Sudan and other places to Alexandria, then from it and across the Mediterranean sea to Europe and adjacent Asia.

Though it might look like a scientific name, *Cassia Officinalis* is actually the apothecary term for this plant, and hence *Officinalis*—the Latin adjective denoting tools, utensils and medical compounds—is written with an initial upper-case letter, unlike specific epithets, which are always written with an initial lower-case letter today.

Synonyms:[3]

Historically, *Senna alexandrina* was used in the form of senna pods, or as herbal tea made from the leaves, as a laxative.[6] It also serves as a fungicide.[6]

Modern medicine has used senna extracts since at least the 1950s[7] as a laxative.[8][9] If accidentally ingested by infants, it can cause side effects such as severe diaper rash.[8] The active ingredients are several senna glycosides[10] which interact with immune cells in the colon.[11]

