



## *Ipomoea carnea*

*Algodon bravo*, *Candudo-de-pita*, Bush Morning Glory

- Native to the Amazon River basin
- Convolvulaceae
- Ornamental with medicinal uses

*Ipomoea carnea* is native to the Amazon River basin but is found throughout Mesoamerica including all vegetation zones of Mexico. There are 500 *Ipomoea* species with an expansive range of ethnobotanical uses, all of which are native to the Americas. *Ipomoea*

*batatas*, the sweet potato, *Ipomoea purga* — used by native people to induce vomiting, and *Ipomoea violacea* — a ceremonial plant used by the Zapotec people of Mexico that contains alkaloids similar to LSD. These are just a few ethnobotanically important relatives of *Ipomoea carnea*. However as will be noted, *Ipomoea carnea* has its own significant legacy as an ornamental and medicinal plant.

### Habitat and Cultivation

- Sun: Full Sun
- Soil: Well-drained
- Water: Dry to medium

*Ipomoea carnea* is a climbing, perennial woody vine that produces showy, funnel-shaped pink flowers throughout the late spring to early fall. The plant is grown ornamentally all over the world, but can be found in the wild—especially in areas where its relative *I. batata* (the sweet potato) is grown. The leaves, roots, and fruit of *Ipomoea carnea* are poisonous to humans, livestock and other animals. Therefore, it is important not to plant in areas where livestock and pets could have access.

### Ethnobotany

#### Tools

The hollow stem of *Ipomoea carnea* has more uses than one might expect. In Brazil, the stems are cut and used as tobacco pipes. They refer to *Ipomoea carnea* as *canudo-de-pita*, meaning ‘pipe cane’ in Portuguese. The stems are used for paper-making, firewood, and fencing throughout their native region.

#### Medicine

*Ipomoea carnea* is toxic and has been used traditionally throughout its native regions as a purgative. However, recent studies suggest that *Ipomoea carnea* has cancer-inhibiting properties. It is also being investigated for its anti-microbial and antioxidant properties.

## Spiritual

*Ipomoea carnea* is mildly psychoactive and contains ergot alkaloids in higher concentrations than its more well-known psychoactive relative *Ipomoea violacea*. One of the most famous derivatives of ergot alkaloids is the psychedelic drug LSD. However, ergot alkaloids are extremely unsafe and can cause catastrophic side effects to the liver and circulatory system that can result in death. In Ecuador, *Ipomoea carnea* is called *florón* and *borrachera*, meaning the 'inebriator'. This is the same common name used for many other psychoactive plants native to Ecuador, including the *Brugmansia* species. Shamans in Ecuador consume *Ipomoea carnea* seeds for religious insight. Native people of the Ucayali region of Peru use *Ipomoea carnea* as an additive to *ayahuasca*, a psychoactive brew used as a traditional spirit medicine by indigenous cultures of the Amazon River basin.



## Ecology

*Ipomoea carnea* attracts butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds as pollinators. Due to its toxicity, it has natural pesticide properties to ward off unwelcome predators. It is toxic to many animals, including livestock and cattle.

## References

- Duke, J. A. (1994). *Amazonian ethnobotanical dictionary*. Boca Raton, Fla: CRC Press.
- Rätsch, C. (2005). *The encyclopedia of psychoactive plants : ethnopharmacology and its applications*. Rochester, Vt: Park Street Press.