

## Picture-story

## Poisoning with "hondala" leaves due to misidentification as "passion fruit" leaves

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### Introduction

Hondala (*Adenia hondala*) leaves are very similar to "passion fruit" leaves, making it difficult to distinguish between the two. People eat hondala leaves as "mallum" due to misidentification with passion fruit leaves and suffer from severe toxicity. The genus *Adenia* is represented in Sri Lanka by *Adenia wightiana* and *Adenia hondala* (1). Hondala grows in both dry and wet regions up to 500 m elevation.

### Case report

Four members of one family including an 8-year old from Vahakotte-Galewela had vomiting and diarrhoea about two hours after dinner with "mallum" of "passion fruit" leaves. All were admitted to the local hospital and transferred to Teaching Hospital, Kurunegala with suspected hondala poisoning, because their father raised this possibility. On admission the patients were very ill with vomiting, diarrhoea with blood, and fever. All were given intravenous fluid and critical care support, and recovered without complications. The culpable plants were identified as hondala (*Adenia hondala*). (Figures 1, 2 and 3)

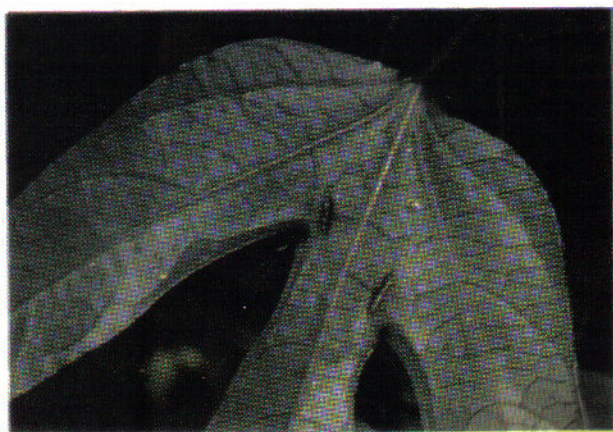


Figure 1. Three-lobed leaves of hondala (magnification: 1×1).



Figure 2. Flower of hondala (magnification: 1×½).



Figure 3. Fruit of hondala (magnification: 1×¼).

### Discussion

Hondala and passion fruit are members of the family *Passifloraceae*. Both plants share similar morphological features making it difficult to distinguish them. Both are climbers possessing tendrils. Leaves are mostly three-lobed and hondala leaves have glands. The flowers also look similar except that hondala flowers have coloured filamentous outgrowths and are unisexual. Hondala fruits are different from passion fruit, being orange, and splitting into three valves (1,2).

Hondala contains cyanogenic glycosides, that release hydrogen cyanide, causing severe toxicity (2,3). The public and medical personnel should be aware of this problem to prevent and treat such cases of poisoning.

### References

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