



# Ramie (*Boehmeria nivea*): Strongest Bast Fibre Yielding Crop

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## Abstract

Ramie an important bast fibre has been in use since ancient times. In India, it is cultivated in western ghats and North Eastern region. Because of its long ultimate fibre cell it has enough commercial importance and huge demand in the market. The unexplored fibre crop deserves proper attention for using it in textile industry also. The article focusses on physico-chemical characteristics and advantages of Ramie.

**Keyword:** Ramie, cultivation in India, fibre quality, Physico-chemical characteristics

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Ramie or *Boehmeria nivea* (L.) Gaud. is one of the oldest vegetable fibers in the world and has been used by human civilization for thousands of years. It is a member of Urticaceae or Nettle family. This fibre was popularly used in China, Japan, Egypt, even in India in ancient times. It was used to wrap the mummies in Egypt during the period 5000 - 3000 B. C. In Indian literature, ramie finds its reference in "Abhijanana Sakuntalam", written by Kalidasa in 400 A.D. Ramie was grown in China for several centuries even before the introduction of cotton by the Chinese people in 1300 A. D. According Sarma 2008, ramie is native of Central and Western China, though also found in Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia and other South-East Asian countries.

## Indian Scenario

In India, it is widely grown in Western Ghats, Arunachal Pradesh, North Eastern region of India, especially in Assam. In Assam, ramie is often referred as "Rhea". Guwahati, capital of Assam, was previously known as Rheabari which literary means native land of ramie. Indian Council of Agricultural Research has developed Ramie Research Station

(1959) in Sorbhog, a remote village in Barpeta district of Asaam, which is a substation of Central Research Institute of Jute and Allied Fibres (ICAR-CRIJAF), Barrackpore, West Bengal.

The most important ramie producing countries in the world are China, Taiwan, Korea, Philippines and Brazil.

## Physio-chemical Characteristics of Ramie Fibre

Ramie, popularly known as China grass, can be harvested up to six times in one year. It has a large number of un-branched stems that originates from the underground rhizomes and has a crop life from six to twenty years. The fibers require chemical or enzymatic or chemi-microbial treatment to eliminate the gums and pectins present in the bark.

Each strand of ramie fibre is single-celled, flattened in cross-section, irregular in shape, has thick wall and a well-defined lumen, and taper to rounded

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