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Averrhoa bilimbi

BILIMBI (Bengali, English, German, Hindi) is an evergreen tree. Native to Malaysia it has small fragrant, red flowers, with white stamens.

It is also known as *Arbre à cornichon* (French), *Balimbing* (Javanese), *Balingbing* (Sundanese), *Belimbing asam* (Malay), *Belimbing besu* (Malay), *Belimbing buloh* (Malay), *Belimbing wuluh* (Malay), *Bilimbikal* (Tamil), *Bilimbinaum* (German), *Bilumbi* (Telugu), *Biling* (Singhalese), *Bimbling plum* (English, Caribbean), *Birinbi* (Japanese), *Blimbing*, *Blimblim* (Creole), *Blimbu* (Gujarati), *Camias*, *Carambolier bilimbi* (French), *Cornichon des Indes* (French), *Cucumber tree*, *Grosella china* (Cuban, Spanish), *Gurkenbaum* (German), *Huang gua shu* (Chinese), *Kamiás* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Khe tau* (Vietnamese), *Mimbros* (Costa Rican, El Salvador, Spanish), *Mu hu gua* (Chinese), *Pepino de Indias* (Argentinian, Spanish), *Pickle fruit*, *Sour finger carambola*, *Ta-ling-pring* (Thai), *Tree sorrel*, *Vinagrillo* (Spanish, Venezuelan), *Xiang yang tao* (Chinese), and *Zibeline* (French).

Like those of the carambola (*Averrhoa carambola*), bilimbi leaves will hang down from their normally horizontal position if touched during daylight, and at night they droop naturally.

Bilimbi is a local native name.

In south-eastern Asia the sour tasting bilimbi (more so than carambola, *Averrhoa carambola*) is generally cooked with fish, or the gherkin-like fruit are used to make pickles (especially for curries) and is an ingredient in jams and other preserves.

Locally the fruit juice is used to clean the hands and to remove stains from linen. It has also been used in parts of Malaysia to clean the blade of the traditional *kris* or dagger.

The fruit have provided a fixing agent for dyeing silk orange.

Bilimbi is believed to have been introduced to the Caribbean and Middle America at the end of the 18th Century.

Medicinally, the leaves have been used locally in treatments for itches and some venereal diseases, and they have also been an ingredient in cough remedies. In the form of a paste the leaves have been used in Java (now an Indonesian island) to treat rheumatism and mumps, a flower infusion has been taken for coughs, and a fruit conserve has been prescribed for beriberi (caused by a lack of Vitamin B).