

Citrus latifolia

[Synonyms : *Citrus aurantiifolia* var. *latifolia*, *Citrus aurantiifolia* var. *tahiti*]

TAHITI LIME is a hybrid tree. Possibly native to the Middle East.

It is also known as Bearss lime, *Chanh Ba Tư* (Vietnamese), *Chanh không hạt* (Vietnamese), *Chanh Tahiti* (Vietnamese), *Kuan ye lai mu* (Chinese), *Lima* (Italian), *Lima común da Persia* (Spanish), *Lime de Perse* (French), *Lime de Tahiti* (French), *Limeira Bearss* (Portuguese), *Limero de Tahiti* (Spanish), *Limetta* (Italian), *Limetta di Tahiti* (Italian), *Limettier de Tahiti* (French), Persian lime, *Persian limetti* (Finnish), *Persische Limette* (German), Seedless lime, *Tahichi raimu* (Japanese), *Tahitilimette* (German), *Tahiti-limonelle* (German), and *Tahiti-Limonellenbaum* (German).

Latifolia is made up of Latin *lati-* (broad, wide) and *-folia* (leaved) components.

Authorities believe that tahiti lime, which would have begun its journey in its native habitat near the eastern Mediterranean, reached Florida in the south-eastern United States by an extremely convoluted route. The tree 'landed' in Australia via Brazil (where Portuguese traders may have introduced it) in about 1824. It is believed to have continued on from there to Tahiti and then proceeded across the Pacific Ocean to California on the North American mainland, arriving there between 1850 and 1880. This well-travelled plant then traversed that Continent to end up in Florida on the eastern side in 1883.

The very small, pale yellow fruit with their bitter-tasting, virtually seedless, light greenish-yellow pulp seem to be in demand today primarily for their juice. At the beginning of the 21st Century it is said that this is the most commonly commercially cultivated lime in the USA but it has taken over a century to acquire its popularity. Although it seems to have become a well-established commercial crop in Florida between the two World Wars in the first half of the 20th Century it was not until the 1970s and 1980s that the size of the harvest justified its modern popular acclaim.

Today the juice is in demand commercially as an ingredient for drinks and in Florida locally it also offers an alternative to vinegar in salad dressings.

The juice has been used locally on the one hand to bleach hair and on the other to clean the insides of tea and coffee pots.

Medicinally, tahiti lime juice has been used to ease the symptoms of coral stings and, if used quickly enough, it is said even to have offered some relief from the oral inflammation and irritation experienced from unwittingly biting into a piece of such plants as dumbcane (*Dieffenbachia seguine*).