

Diospyros discolor

[Synonyms : *Cavanillea philippensis*, *Diospyros blancoi*, *Diospyros mabola*, *Diospyros philippensis*]

BUTTER FRUIT is an evergreen tree. Native to Malaysia and the Philippines it has waxy-petalled, slightly-scented creamy-white flowers.

It is also known as *Bisbul* (Indonesian, Malay), *Buah lemah* (Malay), *Buah mantega* (Malay), *Buah mentega* (Malay), *Buah sagalat* (Malay), *Caca de chat* (Reunionese), *Camagón* (Spanish), *Kamagong* (Malay), *Kayu mentega* (Malay), Mabola tree, Mabolo, Macassar ebony, *Ma-rit* (Thai), *Pécego-de-India* (Portuguese), *Pommier velours* (French), Velvet apple, Velvet persimmon, and *Yi se shi* (Chinese).

Warning – the hairs can irritate the skin.

Discolor is derived from Greek *di-* (two, twice) and Latin *-color* (colour) components meaning ‘two-coloured or of two different and usually distinct colours’.

The apple-shaped velvety-skinned, unpleasant-smelling pink to reddish-brown fruit are harvested and enjoyed locally. Crisp unripe fruit are fried as a vegetable or eaten raw as a fruit. The mature fruit with their aromatic sweet-tasting, dark cream-colour are eaten (with the hairs rubbed off the skin) fresh and raw as a pudding alone or in fruit salad. The fruit juice is used to make preserves and drinks.

According to some authorities local people shopping in Filipino markets believe that the best combs to be had there are made from butter fruit wood. (Like that from the date plum *Diospyros lotus* it is sometimes called Camogan ebony.)

In south-eastern Asia these trees are cultivated in the Philippines especially – often as shade trees at roadsides as well as for their ornamental attributes. They were introduced to Calcutta (India) in 1811 and to London (England) in 1822. Today butter fruit trees are also grown on mainland tropical America in addition to the Caribbean.