

Eugenia uniflora

[Synonyms : *Eugenia brasiliana*, *Eugenia costata*, *Eugenia indica*, *Eugenia lacustris*, *Eugenia michelii*, *Eugenia microphylla*, *Eugenia parkeriana*, *Myrtus brasiliana*, *Plinia pedunculata*, *Plinia rubra*, *Stenocalyx affinis*, *Stenocalyx brunneus*, *Stenocalyx dasyblastus*, *Stenocalyx glaber*, *Stenocalyx impunctatus*, *Stenocalyx lucidus*, *Stenocalyx michelii*, *Stenocalyx strigosus*, *Stenocalyx uniflorus*]

FLORIDA CHERRY is a shrub or tree. Native to tropical South America (especially Brazil) it has fragrant creamy-white flowers with tufts of prominent, pale yellow-tipped, white stamens.

It is also known as *Bärmyrten* (Swedish), Brazil cherry, Brazilian cherry, Cayenne cherry, *Cayennekirsche* (German), *Cayennekirsebær* (Danish), *Cereza de Cayena* (Spanish), *Cereza cuadrada* (Colombian, Spanish), *Cerezo de Cayena* (Spanish), *Cerezo de Surinam* (Spanish), *Cerise à côtes* (French), *Cerise carrée* (French), *Cerise de Cayenne* (French), *Cerisier de Cayenne* (French), *Cěrmai bělanda* (Malay), *Ciliegio di Cayenna* (Italian), *Einblutige Kirschmyrte* (German), *Eugenie* (Danish), *Eŭgenio unuflora* (Esperanto), *Fan ying tao* (Chinese), *Goraka-jambu* (Sinhalese), *Guinda* (Salvadoran), *Hong guo zi* (Chinese), *Hong zi guo* (Chinese), *Kirschmyrte* (German), *Leng guo pu tao* (Chinese), *Ma-yom-farang* (Thai), *Myrten* (Swedish), *Nagapiry* (Spanish), *Nanga-piré* (Argentinian, Uruguayan), *Pendanga* (Venezuelan), *Pitanga* (Brazilian, English, Portuguese, Spanish), *Pitanga cherry*, *Pitanga da praia* (Portuguese), *Pitanga du Brésil* (French), *Pitangueira* (Portuguese), *Red Brazil cherry*, *Surinaamsche kersh* (Surinamese), *Surinaamse kers* (Dutch), *Surinam cherry*, *Surinaminkirsikka* (Finnish), and *Surinamkirsche* (German).

Uniflora is derived from Latin *uni-* (one) and *-flora* (flowered) components meaning ‘one-flowered or with solitary flowers’.

Authorities believe that it was the Portuguese traders who introduced Florida cherry from Brazil to India. But it was a specimen in Italy (in a garden in Pisa) that was first described botanically – and this plant was believed to have come from India, more precisely Goa on the western coast. It was introduced to Singapore in about 1900 and from there it spread to Malaysia.

The small shiny ripe fruit (that have matured from green through orange to red to black and are sweetly aromatic-tasting) are eaten raw and made into puddings, pies, sherbets, syrup, jams and compôtes (especially in Brazil) – and the unripe fruit are used to make chutney. In Brazil the juice is fermented for vinegar as well. These fruit have also been used to make wine, alcohol and liqueur, and the young leaves can be prepared as a tea. Perhaps it should be mentioned however that in Florida where it is still a familiar sight as hedging it is contended that the raw fruit are only eaten by children now although they used to be viewed there as a culinary asset.

Locally the pungent crushed leaves have been scattered on barn floors as an insect repellent. They used also to be strewn in Brazilian homes to repel flies as they were trodden under foot.

In Brazil too the bark has been used for tanning.

This plant can often be found cultivated as hedging not least in the southern United States.

The Uruguayan National Administration of Posts issued a series of stamps which bore indigenous flowers. Florida cherry was one of them.

Medicinally, local Brazilian herbalists have recommended a leaf infusion for easing stomach upsets and treating worms, while in Surinam a leaf decoction has been taken as a cold cure and it has also been used as an ingredient for treating fever.