

*Flacourtia indica*

[Synonyms : *Flacourtia hirtiuscula*, *Flacourtia parvifolia*, *Flacourtia ramontchi*, *Flacourtia sepiaria*, *Gmelina indica*]

**MADAGASCAR PLUM** is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to the Asian tropics (particularly India, Malaysia and Madagascar), it has small fragrant, dull red flushed, greenish-yellow flowers with many stamens.

It is also known as Batoko plum, *Bilangra* (Hindi), *Bincha* (Bengali), *Bitoñgol* (Filipino/Tagalog), Botoko plum, *Flakurtio Hindia* (Esperanto), *Goewernewspruim* (Afrikaans), Governor's plum, Indian plum, *Kaker* (Marathi), *Kakoa* (Punjabi), *Kėrkup kėchil* (Malay), Lesser kerkup, *Putikatada* (Telugu), *Ramončo* (Esperanto), Ramontchi, *Saradan* (Sundanese), *Sottaikala* (Tamil), and *Ta-khop-pa* (Thai).

*Indica* means 'of or from India or the East Indies or the Far East'.

The plum-like, dark red to black fruit can be eaten raw or made into puddings, syrups and preserves. In some areas the fruit are particularly chosen as an accompaniment for fish.

These fruit have a high iron content and drinks made from them turn brown in sunlight.

The plant has also been cultivated as hedging as it can provide a substantial barrier.

Branches have provided cattle fodder in India. Raccoons and opossum (and surely birds) who much enjoy the fruit in the southern United States, are responsible for spreading the tree as they disperse the seed there. Apparently in urbanized areas this tree is not popular as its ripe fruit stain when they fall and its sharp spines are described as 'anti-social'.

Although the wood has a tendency to split it has been used for turning and for making agricultural implements. It has also been collected for fuel.

In Africa a leaf decoction has offered a remedy for worms in cattle.

Medicinally, in Africa and India particularly, the fruit have been taken as a medicinal jelly for treating various disorders including jaundice and an enlarged spleen. The gum has provided part of treatments for cholera and fever generally, a dry leaf tonic has been prescribed for easing asthma and a bark infusion has not only offered a gargle for relieving sore throats but also the basis for a liniment applied to rheumatic limbs.