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Flacourtia rukam

[Synonyms : *Flacourtia euphlebia*]

INDIAN PRUNE is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native to Malaysia and the Philippines it has tiny yellowish-green to white flowers (the male displaying many yellow stamens).

It is also known as *Amaiit* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Ciruella de Madagascar* (Spanish), *Filimoto* (Fijian, Samoan and Tongan), Governor's plum, Indian plum, *Khrop-dong* (Thai), *Prune malgache* (French), Rukam (English and Malay), and *Rukam manis* (Malay).

Several authorities explain that if the berries are rubbed between the palms or bruised slightly this action causes a chemical change which makes the flesh taste sweeter.

The dark red berries (crowned with their tiny black whiskers) have been cultivated for centuries in Malaysia. The ripe cultivated fruit have sour-tasting juicy yellowish-white pulp and are eaten raw (wild fruit are too bitter). Unripe they are used to make jam, while ripe they are also used for this as well as pies and chutney. Young shoots are eaten raw or cooked as a vegetable.

The wood has been used in Asia for making furniture and its great hardness has recommended it in Java (now part of Indonesia) for making rice pounders.

Medicinally, local herbalists have recommended the juice from young fruit to be taken to ease dysentery and diarrhoea, while the leaf juice has been found to be sufficiently gentle and beneficial as an application on inflamed eyelids. The dried and pounded leaves have been dusted over wounds.