

Grewia flava

[Synonyms : *Grewia cana*, *Grewia hermannioides*]

BRANDYBUSH is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to central and southern Africa (including Zimbabwe) it has small bright yellow flowers with numerous yellow stamens.

It is also known as Bushman cherry, Raisin bush, *Rosyntjebos* (Afrikaans), Velvet raisin bush, *Wilderrosyntjie* (Afrikaans), and Wild raisin.

Flava is Latin *flavus* (golden-yellow, gold-coloured, yellow) meaning ‘yellowish, pale or pure yellow’ with reference to the flowers.

The small reddish-brown fruit have a sultana-like taste and have been an important source of food for local Bushmen. It is noted that the Tswana African tribe prize a delicacy made by mixing the crushed fruit with locusts. More generally local people have ground the dried fruit for making porridge, beer and a more potent alcohol.

When grass has been scarce game and livestock have grazed on the leaves.

Some folk have driven pegs made from this wood into the ground as lightning conductors – whether in superstition or practicality the records are unclear. On the other hand the Kgakgadi tribe must have held brandybush in some respect as they tied a small piece of the inner bark to the right arm of a father upon his death and to that of each of his children.

While the bark fibre has provided material for basketry, the split twigs have served as toothbrushes, the branches have provided walking sticks and Bushmen have used the wood for making their bows and arrows.