

Hovenia dulcis

[Synonyms : *Hovenia acerba*, *Hovenia dulcis* var. *glabra*, *Hovenia dulcis* var. *latifolia*, *Hovenia inaequalis*, *Hovenia inequalis*]

CHINESE RAISIN TREE is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to western China it has tiny fragrant, inconspicuous greenish-white flowers.

It is also known as Honey tree, Japanese raisin tree, *Kenponashi* (Japanese), Raisin tree, and *Sicka* (Hindi).

The small, inedible brownish-black berry-fruit have short edible reddish-stalks (or ‘raisins’) that swell and become knobby, chewy and moist and have a pear or raisin-like taste and a translucent reddish-brown colour as the fruit mature.

Dulcis is Latin (sweet, pleasant, delightful).

It was introduced to the West in about 1820.

Although Chinese raisin tree is cultivated most particularly in Japan it has attracted a wide following elsewhere as an ornamental plant. In Japan of course the stalks are of prime interest. These can be dried like raisins with which they are compared (as several of the tree’s common names imply) and apart from being chewed raw they can also be eaten in other ways as raisins are. Apparently an extract made from twigs, young leaves and seed is also eaten as an alternative to honey.

Medicinally, in Chinese medicine the chewy stalks especially (and the seeds) are used to treat hangovers and fluid retention.