

Lansium domesticum

[Synonyms : *Aglaia domestica*, *Lansium javanicum*]

LANGSAT (English, Javanese, Tamil) is a tree. Native to tropical Asia (especially Malaysia) it has many small fragrant, pale yellow or white flowers.

It is also known as *Bijitan* (Sundanese), *Duku*, *Langsāt* (Thai), *Langsĕk* (Indonesian), *Lanzone* (Filipino/Tagalog), and *Lasa* (Malay).

The variability of the taste of the fruit is such that it can range from bitterness through to sweetness. Some authorities point to two distinct varieties *Lansium domesticum* var. *domesticum* (*duku*) and *Lansium domesticum* var. *pubescens* (*langsāt* or wild *langsāt* – the smaller fruit growing in the larger bunches).

Warning – authorities note that diabetics should not take a seed decoction.

Domesticum is derived from Latin *domesticus* (belonging to the house, domestic) meaning ‘cultivated, or domesticated’.

Apart from anywhere else the tree was introduced to Sri Lanka in 1869 and Hawaii before 1930. Today *langsats* are particularly cultivated in humid wooded areas in the Asian tropics, on a small scale in Surinam in north-eastern South America – and in parts of the Caribbean where *langsāt* was introduced in the 1920s the odd tree also bears fruit.

The small grape-like, velvety-skinned, pale yellow fruit are sold in local markets and records suggest that they are particularly in demand in the Philippines. They are eaten raw or cooked and can also be preserved in syrup or made into jam.

In parts of Java the skin has not only been burnt as incense (not least to fumigate the air in a sickroom) but also as a mosquito repellent. (Apparently the fruit peel and tree bark have been used in days gone by to make an arrow poison.)

The tough, durable wood has been used locally for construction and in Java particularly it has provided material for tool handles and small utensils. While in some parts of Asia distilled wood tar is used cosmetically for blackening teeth.

Medicinally, leaf and/or bark decoctions have provided a treatment for dysentery in Malaysia and parts of Indonesia – and the leaf juice has been applied to sore eyes and the bark has been prescribed for curing malaria. The bitter-tasting crushed seed has been prescribed for easing fever and it has also offered a remedy for worms. Scorpion stings have been treated with a bark poultice.