

Lecythis zabucajo

[Synonyms : *Lecythis crassinoda*, *Lecythis davisii*, *Lecythis davisii* var. *gracilipes*, *Lecythis hians*, *Lecythis lecomtei*, *Lecythis tumefacta*, *Lecythis vallidissima*, *Lecythis venusta*, *Lecythis zabucaya*]

PARADISE NUT is a tree. Native to Brazil and Guyana it has small, often purple-edged, yellow or white flowers with many stamens.

It is also known as Brazil nut, Monkey nut, Monkey pot nut, Sapucaia nut, Sapucaya nut, and Sapucia nut.

Although these nuts are said to rival brazil nuts (to which they are related) no practicable way of harvesting them has yet been found. When the large woody brown fruit are ripe they do not fall readily to the ground from the tree canopy but the close-fitting lid is detached thus freeing the nuts (seeds) inside. These are plundered by monkeys and parrots. Any that are left drop out (often aided by the wind) only to be scattered far and wide on the forest floor below. There is one other significant drawback and that is that the nuts turn rancid fairly quickly after being released from their woody shell. (This explains why these nuts are relatively rare and can command such a high price.)

Those relatively few nuts that are successfully gathered are eaten locally raw or in confectionery eg. chocolates.

Bees pollinate the flowers and make an enjoyable honey with the nectar.

Seed oil is used in soap in Brazil.

The hard woody fruit shells have been used to trap monkeys. They are often secured to a fence post and then half-filled with maize (*Zea*). Apparently the monkey slides his open paw through the hole where the lid was but is unable to get it out again while he hangs onto a fistful of maize – which he refuses to let go.

Paradise nut was introduced to Sri Lanka in 1897. The tree is now fairly familiar in south-eastern Asia where, according to authorities on that region, it is primarily valued for its vegetable oils and fats (obtained from the nuts) and then as a timber tree and a tannin-producing plant.