

Macadamia integrifolia

[Synonyms : *Macadamia ternifolia*]

MACADAMIA NUT is an evergreen tree. Native to eastern Australia (particularly New South Wales and Queensland) it has small white flowers.

It is also known as Australian hazel nut, Australian nut, Macadamia (English, German), *Noix de macadam* (French), *Queenslandnuss* (German), Queensland nut, Smooth macadamia nut, and Smooth shell macadamia.

Warning – the young leaves and tough nutshells may be poisonous.

Integrifolia is derived from Latin *integer* (entire, whole) and *-folia* (leaved) components meaning ‘with whole or uncut leaves’.

Macadamia nut was only discovered in Australia in the last half of the 19th Century by two European botanists.

Until the last quarter of the 20th Century over 90% of macadamia nuts traded in the world (in actual fact a relatively small supply) were said to be produced in Hawaii where the tree was introduced in about 1881. Initially it had been used there in reforestation programmes and grown as an ornamental plant. But its recognition as an agricultural crop led to it being the source of Hawaii’s third largest agricultural commodity after pineapple (*Ananas comosus*) and sugar cane (*Saccharum officinarum*) – and by the mid-20th Century she had developed a thin-shelled variety. A dramatic challenge from the nuts’ native home (let alone from other countries) then emerged. Australia began investing heavily in research and selection programmes and as a result began to make significant inroads into the Hawaiian dominance of this market – and by the 1990s commercial orchards had also been established in Brazil, Central America, Kenya, southern Africa, Indonesia and Taiwan. (Although seeds were, as in Hawaii, introduced to California in the early 1880s and the trees grow well there it would seem that the State has not as yet entered the commercial market for the nuts on any large scale.)

It was introduced to the Botanic Gardens in Singapore in 1882.

The enjoyable, crisp, light brown shelled nuts seem to have properties that make them especially versatile (like almonds, *Prunus dulcis* var. *dulcis*) in the kitchen, including the fact that they can be frozen.

This firm wood has been used to make furniture.