

Pappea capensis

[Synonyms : *Pappea capensis* var. *radlkoferi*, *Pappea fulva*, *Pappea schumanniana*, *Pappea ugandensis*]

SOUTH AFRICAN CHERRY is a semi-deciduous shrub or tree. Native from Ethiopia to Zimbabwe, and to South Africa. It has yellow or greenish catkin-like spikes of flower. It is also known as *Dopruim* (Afrikaans), Indaba tree, Jacket plum, *Ndirikūmi* (Kikuyu), *Pruimbessie* (Afrikaans), South African prune, *Wildeprium* (Afrikaans), and Wild plum. The seeds yield an edible golden-yellow oil.

Warning - the seed oil can be mildly purgative.

Capensis means 'of or from the Cape (South Africa)'.

Locally the small and round, furry green fruit are eaten raw or the jelly-like and pleasantly flavoured, orange-red flesh is used to make jelly, alcohol or vinegar.

Leaves are browsed by game and livestock – and baboons and birds enjoy eating the fruit. In addition the South African cherry is the sole source of food for a particular night-flying moth – an unfortunate problem for fruit farmers. Apart from its larvae enjoying young foliage the adult moths are the only one of four relevant species that can pierce the skin of the ripe fruit which if unattended these moths would have no problem in spoiling during the hours of darkness. All is not completely lost however as young foliage only emerges in quantity after sufficient November rainfall (a spasmodic occurrence in some areas where the orchards are cultivated) and as these moths dislike bright light orchards are surrounded in this as a barrier when the fruit are maturing on the trees.

South African cherry has been grown as an ornamental plant.

The seed oil has been used as both a lubricant (used by farmers to oil their guns) and as an ingredient in the manufacture of soap.

As large pieces of the tough, brown wood are rare use of it is limited.

In veterinary medicine a root infusion has been given to cattle as a purgative.

Medicinally, in local ministrations a bark preparation has been used to treat some venereal disease, a leaf infusion has been applied to soothe sore eyes, and the seed oil has not only provided a remedy for ringworm but has also been used as a hair restorative.