

Physalis pubescens

[Synonyms : *Physalis angulata*, *Physalis barbadensis*, *Physalis floridana*, *Physalis grisea*, *Physalis hirsuta*, *Physalis hygrophila*, *Physalis minima*, *Physalis neo-mexicana*, *Physalis obscura*, *Physalis pruinosa*, *Physalis pubescens* var. *grisea*, *Physalis pubescens* var. *hygrophila*, *Physalis pubescens* var. *integrifolia*, *Physalis pubescens* var. *pubescens*, *Physalis turbinata*, *Physalis villosa*]

HUSK TOMATO is a hairy spreading annual. Native to south-eastern North America it has small, purple-blotched throated, greenish-yellow flowers.

It is also known as *Alchechengio pubescente* (Italian), *Alkékenge doux* (French), *Alkékenge jaune* (French), *Alkekengi*, *Alquequenje* (Spanish), *Alquequenje amarelo* (Portuguese), Annual groundcherry, Barbadoes-gooseberry, *Batoto* (Guyanese), *Battre autour* (Creole and French), *Bolsa mullaca* (Peruvian), *Camapu* (Portuguese), *Camaru* (Portuguese), Cape gooseberry, *Capische Stachelbeere* (German), *Coqueret* (French), *Coqueret comestible* (French), *Coqueret pubescent* (French), Cut-leaved ground cherry, Downy ground cherry, Dwarf cape gooseberry, *Farolito* (Spanish), *Gelder Alkekengi* (German), Ground cherry, Hairy ground cherry, *Herbe à cloques* (French), *Huevo de sapo* (Spanish), *Jua de capote* (Portuguese), *Jude körsbär* (Swedish), *Kantig lyktört* (Swedish), Low groundcherry, Low hairy groundcherry, *Lyhtykukka* (Finnish), *Man'man lanma* (French), *Mao suan jiang* (Chinese), *Miechunka omszona* (Polish), *Mochyně pýřitá* (Czech), *Muyaca* (Spanish), *Physalis* (German), Pops, Pubescent ground cherry, *Sacabuche peludo* (Puerto Rican), *Saposarapo* (Spanish), *Shokuyô hōzuki* (Japanese), Strawberry tomato, Sun berry, *Tomate verde* (Mexican), *Tomatinho de capucho* (Portuguese), *Topotopo* (Venezuelan), *Vî vao* (Samoan), and Winter cherry.

The transparent and fragile, papery-thin, greenish-brown envelope surrounding each fruit dries as the small, greenish-yellow berries ripen to golden-yellow and drops to the ground when the fruit reach maturity. The husked (enveloped) unripe berries will keep for weeks.

Pubescens means 'hairy or downy'.

Some authorities have noted that these berries were a staple food for the North American Navajo Indians. They not only ground the dried fruit for flour and stored them for Winter food but also ate the sour fruit sweetened with honey and made them into jam as well. Fresh ripe fruit were eaten by children in the Mohave and Yuma tribes, and some of the Navajo Indians ate them raw or boiled.

Locally the sweet-tasting berries (which seem to be an acquired taste) are eaten raw or made into jams, pies and preserves generally or used to make sauces. Unripe the fruit have been steeped in vinegar as a condiment, and when dried the ripe fruit have also been added to cakes.

Medicinally, the fruit have been used locally as a sedative and also a remedy for fluid retention. Herbalists have also used it to treat fevers, coughs and abscesses.