

Pouteria sapota

[Synonyms : *Achradelpha mammosa*, *Achras mammosa*, *Achras zapota*, *Achras zapota major*, *Bassia jussiaei*, *Calocarpum huastecanum*, *Calocarpum mammosum*, *Calocarpum mammosum* var. *bonplandii*, *Calocarpum mammosum* var. *candollei*, *Calocarpum mammosum* var. *ovoideum*, *Calocarpum sapota*, *Calospermum mammosum*, *Calospermum mammosum* var. *bonplandii*, *Calospermum mammosum* var. *candollei*, *Calospermum mammosum* var. *ovoidea*, *Lucuma bonplandii*, *Lucuma mammosa*, *Pouteria mammosa*, *Sapota mammosa*, *Sideroxylon sapota*, *Sideroxylum sapota*, *Vitellaria mammosa*]

MARMALADE PLUM is an evergreen tree. Native to Central America (from Mexico to Nicaragua) it has small, greenish-white to yellow flowers.

It is also known as *Chachaas* (Mexican), *Chachalhaas* (Mexican), *Chico-mamei* (Filipino/Tagalog, Malaysian), *Chicomamey* (Filipino/Tagalog, Malaysian), *Ciko mama* (Indonesian), *Grand sapotillier* (Haitian), *Grosse sapote* (German, Martiniquais), *Guaicume* (Nicaraguan), *Mamey* (Cuban, English), *Mamey colorado* (Spanish), *Mamey de la tierra* (Panamanian), *Mamey sapote*, *Mammee apple*, *Mammee sapote*, *Mammee zapote*, *Mammey sapote*, *Marmalade fruit*, *Naseberry*, *Sapota* (Spanish), *Sapote* (English, Spanish), *Sapote à creme* (Guadeloupe), *Sapote colorado* (Spanish), *Sapotier jaune d'oeuf* (Haitian), *Tezonzapote* (Mexican), *Trúng gà* (Vietnamese), *Zapote colorado* (Spanish), *Zapote de carne* (Colombian), and *Zapote grande* (Salvadoran).

The tree's trunk contains gummy white latex. One fruit can weigh from ½-5 lb.

The flowers are pollinated by bees attracted by the nectar.

The seeds yield a semi-solid oil.

Warning – the sap can cause extreme irritation to skin and eyes, and the leaves are believed by some to be poisonous.

Sapota (also spelt *zapota*) is derived from *tzapotl* an Aztec name used for several species that have sweet-tasting, rounded fruit with large seeds.

This tree provided an important part of the diet of local American Indian tribes for hundreds and hundreds of years before the arrival of the Spanish conquerors. The fresh nutritious ripe fruit were usually eaten raw. When Hernando Cortés (1485-1547) after establishing Mexico City, marched his men south to Honduras (1524-1526) it is claimed their survival on this expedition owed much to the marmalade plum. Perhaps however the nutritional importance is best illustrated by the fact that these trees were invariably left standing when all else had been felled for plantations, farms or habitation.

The unripe fruit have been prepared as a vegetable. Fresh, nutritious ripe fruit are used to make milkshakes and other drinks, ice cream, fruit salad, puddings and preserves, including marmalade and jam – and is said to be especially enjoyed in the Caribbean and Florida in the southern United States, as well as in its native range. Records suggest that the seeds are used as a flavouring with cocoa (*Theobroma cacao*) to make some of the chocolate in the United States (and in the tree's homeland, particularly Mexico) which according to some adds a bitter flavouring and for others is an adulterant increasing the bulk.

The large shiny seeds have been used in parts of Ecuador for making necklaces. While in Costa Rica in the early 19th Century these starchy seeds are said to have been used to provide a

stiffening agent when ironing linen. Records also indicate their use by the perfumery industry as a source of *noyau* scent. The semi-solid seed oil (known as *sapuyucol* or *zapoyola*) was originally applied as a fixative over painted decorations made on gourds and other objects – and it has also been used in making soap.

This tree seems to be viewed primarily as a source of fruit whether in its native land or elsewhere. Thus it is generally only when the fruit are of poor quality that the lumberjack gets a free hand. Its pale- to reddish-brown wood is strong and has been used for housebuilding and for making carts and furniture.

The tree itself is often cultivated on coffee (*Coffea*) plantations for its shade.

Medicinally, local herbalists (especially in El Salvador and Guatemala) have used the white seed oil in remedies for baldness, as well as in treatments for muscular and rheumatic pain. It has also been used as a skin tonic, and to ease discomfort experienced during the treatment of ear and eye disorders – and the tree's latex has been applied to skin fungi.