

Prunus davidiana

[Synonyms : *Amygdalus davidiana*, *Persica davidiana*]

DAVID PEACH is a deciduous tree. Native to south-western China and to Mongolia it has small white or pale pink flowers before the leaves.

It is also known as Chinese peach, Chinese wild peach, David's peach, *Manshuu nomomo* (Japanese), *Pêcher de Mandchourie* (French), *Pêcher de Mongolie* (French), *Shan mao tao* (Chinese), and *Shan tao* (Chinese).

Davidiana commemorates a French Lazarist missionary and naturalist, Père Armand David (1826-1900). After his ordination in 1862 he was eventually sent to Beijing and is said to have been rigorous in maintaining his religious duties and obeying the Order's rules. Yet despite these demands he managed to find time for his interest in zoology, botany, geology and palaeontology and the Paris botanical garden (Jardin des Plantes) eventually commissioned him to make journeys of discovery on their behalf. His specimens included over 1000 animals, birds and plants, a significant number of which were unknown to Europeans at that time and his travels took him as far afield from the Chinese capital as Mongolia, Tibet and central China (as well as to the north of China and to the western provinces). The most striking of his zoological discoveries for the non-naturalist were probably the giant panda and Père David's deer. Authorities note that his botanical specimens included new species of about 40 of the *Primulae* genus, over that number of gentians and at least 52 new rhododendrons. Photinia was one of the plants he discovered and introduced to cultivation in 1869.

The Chinese use the seeds in the small yellowish fruit for flavouring puddings and confectionery.

The tree became naturalised in North America quickly (according to some authorities it could have reach that Continent via Florida in the 16th Century – which seems a little far fetched if it is correct that Père Armand David not only discovered it but was also responsible for introducing it to domestication in 1865). Such authorities then ponder on the possibility that the tree had reached the Carolinas and Georgia before English settlers arrived there – again doubtful as other authorities indicate that it only reached North American shores in 1865 which would be plausible if the claimed history for the respected French Lazarist missionary in the Far East is accepted.

David peach is cultivated as an ornamental.