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Prunus domestica

[Synonyms : *Prunus communis*, *Prunus damascena*, *Prunus domestica* var. *damascena*, *Prunus domestica* var. *domestica*, *Prunus domestica* subsp. *oeconomica*, *Prunus oeconomica*, *Prunus pyramidalis*, *Prunus sativa* subsp. *domestica*]

PLUM is a deciduous shrub or tree. Possibly from south-western Asia it has small greenish-white flowers.

It is also known as *Aloobuckara* (Urdu), *Alubokhara* (Hindi), *Alucha* (Hindi), *Ameixa* (Portuguese), *Ameixeira* (Portuguese), *Anjās* (Arabic), *Barqûq* (Arabic), *Blomme* (Danish), *Ciruela* (Spanish), Common plum, *Eirinen* (Welsh), European plum, Garden plum, *Hauspflaume* (German), *Iggâss* (Arabic), *Li zi* (Chinese), *Luumu* (Finnish), *Luumupuu* (Finnish), *Mei zi* (Chinese), *Muturamuthi* (Kikuyu), *Ou zhou li* (Chinese), *Pflaume* (German), *Plommon* (Swedish), *Plommonträd* (Swedish), *Prugna* (Italian), *Prugno* (Italian), *Pruim* (Dutch), *Pruna* (Maltese), *Prune* (French), *Prune commune* (French), *Prunier cultivé* (French), *Prunier domestique* (French), *Prunuso doma* (Esperanto), *Seiyō sumomo* (Japanese), *Slivka domáca* (Slovak), *Slivoň švestka* (Czech), *Sliwa domowa* (Polish), *Susina* (Italian), *Susino* (Italian), *Švestka* (Czech), *Švestka domáci* (Czech), *Trnka* (Slovak), *Vira-ruruka* (Marathi), Wild plum, *Zwetschge* (German), and *Zwetschgenbaum* (German); and in flower language is said to be a symbol of ‘a bastard’ (withered tree), fidelity (blossom, or tree), independence (wild), and ‘keep your promises’.

An edible oil is extracted from the fruit.

Domestica is derived from Latin *domesticus* (belonging to the house, domestic) meaning ‘cultivated, or domesticated’.

Plums must have been one of the more important fruits for the ancient Egyptians as archaeologists found dried remains of them among the stores provided for the afterlife of the architect of Thebes in his tomb at Kha.

The yellow, green, red or purple fruit were familiar to the Etruscans and the Romans not only cultivated them in Italy but also in some of the countries they occupied (including Syria). Authorities believe that about a dozen varieties could have been known during the time of the Roman Empire.

Although some authorities claim that the Crusaders introduced the plum to western Europe classical writers such as Galen (c.130-201) the celebrated Greek physician, mention Spanish prunes that authorities say suggests that plum trees uncultivated or not must have been common in the Iberian peninsular long before then. However it is believed that it was not until the 15th or 16th Century that plum trees were widely cultivated in northern Europe.

The fruit are used by the drinks industry today to make alcoholic spirit.

Seeds provide an ingredient for the cosmetics industry eg. in face-masks for dry skin.

One Welsh superstition connected with the tree held that if it flowered in December there would be a death in the family.

There are references to the plum in the plays of the well-known English dramatist, William Shakespeare (1564-1616). In *Hamlet* he wrote

.....for the satirical slave says here, that old men have gray
beards; that their faces are wrinkled; their eyes purging thick amber
and plum-tree gum; and that

Then there is an English proverb that dates back to 1678 and runs

A cherry year, a merry year; a plum year, a dumb year.

Apart from the implied reference to the amount of blossom generated in any one year
nobody seems to be able to offer a full explanation for the rhyme. However another that
is self-explanatory has the words

A good wheat year, a fine plum year.

The hard and dense wood is used today for turning and cabinetwork.

Medicinally, different parts of the tree were used by herbalists to treat period problems,
ringworm, ulcers, sore throats, earache and piles.

It is the birthday flower for 15th June.

PRUNE is a dried red or purple plum.

It is also known as *Pruneau* (French).

Although since Roman times plums have been dried in the sun today most are processed in
ovens or subjected to a dehydration technique involving immersion in hot syrup.

It is the last-mentioned method that produces the 'Karlshad plum' that is packed in wooden
boxes as a special Christmas treat. Another prune delicacy is that from the prepared,
stoned Agen plums that come from western France. At a more mundane level California,
in the United States, has a thriving industry today in marketing their large more 'common
or garden' prunes.

Prunes are used to make a Hungarian brandy.

In the plays of the famous English dramatist, William Shakespeare (1564-1616) prunes are
mentioned several times including in Part 2 of *Henry IV* when Doll Tear-sheet cries

..... He a captain! hang him, rogue! he lives upon mouldy stewed
prunes, and dried cakes.

Medicinally, the prune has a mildly laxative effect, a quality well-known for thousands of
years.

[Synonyms : *Prunus domestica* var. *institia*, *Prunus institia*]

QUETSCHÉ (English, French) is a variety of plum.

It is also known as *Ameixa quetsche* (Portuguese), *Ciruela quetche* (Spanish), German prune,
Kwets (Dutch), Quetschen plum, *Sveskeblomme* (Danish), *Xi yang li zi* (Chinese), *Zú'rùr*
(Arabic), *Zwetsche* (German).

Alsace in France is famous for this variety and French people who enjoy them will check the
packaging for declaration of this place of origin as confirmation of authenticity.

Quetsche are generally used by the drinks industry for distillation and as an ingredient in
liqueurs.