

Prunus institia

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

DAMSON is a deciduous shrub. Native to south-eastern and western Europe and to the Mediterranean (especially Syria), it has small white flowers.

It is also known as *Abrunheiro* (Portuguese), *Alubokhara* (Hindi), *Aluka* (Sanskrit), *Bolas*, *Bullace*, *Bullace plum*, *Bullies*, *Bullions*, *Bully-bloom*, *Ciruelo silvestre* (Spanish), *Crèque* (French), *Damson plum*, *Endrino grande* (Spanish), *Espino de injertar* (Spanish), *Haferpflaume* (German), *Kraege* (Danish), *Krieche* (German), *Kriechenpflaume* (German), *Kriikuna* (Finnish), *Krikon* (Swedish), *Kroos* (Dutch), *Kroosjes* (Dutch), *Mirabelky* (Czech), *Niso* (Spanish), *Pflaume* (German), *Pflaumenbaum* (German), *Prugnola da siepe* (Italian), *Sibarelles* (French), *Slíva* (Czech), *Slivoň obecná* (Czech), *Špendlíky* (Czech), *Vira-ruruka* (Marathi), *Trnka* (Slovak), and Wild damson.

The small round, plain or streaked, greenish-yellow to red bullace fruit contrast with the oval black-skinned (occasionally yellow) damson fruit.

Institia means 'grafted or foreign'.

Some food authorities note that archaeologists are supposed to have found damson remains in the excavations of the Swiss lake villages at Robenhausen which date back to about 8000 BC – and the fruit are said to have been known equally long in the Middle East.

BULLACE is a variety of damson. It is a deciduous shrub or tree with small white flowers.

It is also known as *Bullison*, *Bullums*, *Bwlas* (Welsh), *Christians*, *Crex*, *Crickseys*, *Crystals*, *Eirin Bwlas* (Welsh), *Keslings*, *Scad*, *Slaths*, *Wild damson*, and *Wild plum*.

The small round, plain or streaked, greenish-yellow to red bullace fruit contrast with the oval black-skinned (occasionally yellow) damson fruit.

Bullace is believed to have reached England (probably from France) in the Middle Ages and it was eaten there as a plum (*Prunus domestica*) (which gradually superseded them) is today. However despite their fall from grace bullace wine is still made sometimes in country districts.

Medicinally, herbalists were known to recommend the use of the root and branch bark, the flowers and fruit for various disorders. In particular the fruit steeped in gin ie. damson gin, were considered to be an effective remedy for diarrhoea.