

Prunus mahaleb

[Synonyms : *Cerasus mahaleb*, *Padellus mahaleb*, *Padus mahaleb*]

ST. LUCIE CHERRY is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to Asia Minor and eastern Europe it has small fragrant white flowers and leaves that turn yellow in Autumn.

It is also known as Black cherry, *Cerezo de Santa Lucia* (Spanish), *Cerisier de mahaleb* (French), *Ciliegio canino* (Italian), *Ciliegio di Santa Lucia* (Italian), English cherry, *Felsenkirsche* (German), *Habbu' ma'lan* (Persian), *Lõhnav kirsipuu* (Estonian), *Lucienholz* (German), Mahaleb cherry, *Mahalebka obecná* (Czech), *Mahalebkirsche* (German), *Mahhlab* (Arabic), Perfumed cherry, *Priyunger* (Sanskrit), *Pruno odoroso* (Italian), Rock cherry, St. Lucie's cherry, *Sajmeggy* (Hungarian), *Shagar adrîs* (Arabic), *Stein-Weichsel* (German), *Törökmeggy* (Hungarian), *Třešeň mahalebka* (Czech), *Tunda la Mahaleb* (Swahili), *Türkische Kirsche* (German), *Türkische Weichsel* (German), *Veikselinkirsikka* (Finnish), *Vejksel* (Swedish), *Vejkseltrad* (Swedish), *Višeň turecká* (Czech), *Weichsel* (Danish), *Weichselboom* (Dutch), *Weichselkers* (Dutch), and *Weichsel-Kirsche* (German).

The seeds (kernels) yield an oil.

Mahaleb is a name of an ancient Lebanese town (although it should be said that authorities are uncertain that its use in this botanical name has any relevance).

The tiny black fruit have been used to make liqueur. Their ground kernels have been used as a spice called *mahaleb*, *mahlab*, *mahlap* or *mahleb*. This has been used for flavouring cakes, confectionery, pastries, biscuits and bread in the Middle East and Greece. The spice has also provided a traditional flavouring for Armenian food.

The fruit yield a violet dye and seed oil provides an ingredient for the perfumery industry. Leaves have offered a tobacco substitute (as well as a tobacco flavouring), while a decoction of leaves has been used to flavour milk.

The very hard and heavy, fragrant dark reddish-brown wood known as St. Lucie wood, has been used for turning, as well as for making furniture (for which it is claimed to be especially prized in some parts of Europe), toys, small boxes, walking sticks, tobacco pipes and cigarette holders.

The plant has been used in cherry orchards as grafting stock – and has also been grown as an ornamental.

Medicinally, the seed oil has provided Arab herbalists with a treatment for some bladder disorders.