

*Psidium guajava*

[Synonyms : *Guajava pyrifera*, *Myrtus guajava*, *Myrtus guajava* var. *pyrifera*, *Psidium guajava* var. *cujavillum*, *Psidium guajava* var. *guajava*, *Psidium guava*, *Psidium guayava*, *Psidium igatemyensis*, *Psidium pomiferum*, *Psidium pumilum*, *Psidium pumilum* var. *guadalupense*, *Psidium pyrifera*]

**GUAVA** (English, French, Swedish) is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native to the West Indies, Middle America and Peru it has small faintly scented, white flowers with many creamy-tipped white stamens.

It is also known as *Abas guayaba* (Ecuadorean-Galapagos Islands), *Amrud* (Hindi, Punjabi), *Amrut* (Fijian), *Apple guava*, *Bayawas* (Javanese), *Common guava*, *Farang* (Thai), *Fan shek lau* (Chinese), *Goejaba* (Dutch), *Goiaba* (Portuguese), *Goiabeira* (Portuguese), *Goyav* (Creole), *Goyave* (French), *Goyavier* (French), *Goyya* (Telugu), *Gua* (Twi), *Guajava*, *Guajava-Træ* (Danish), *Guajave* (German), *Guave* (German), *Guayaba* (Spanish), *Guayabo* (Spanish), *Guayave-Baum* (German), *Gujavo* (Esperanto), *Jambu batu* (Malay), *Jambu klutuk* (Javanese), *Jamruk* (Gujarati), *Kautoga* (Niuean), *Kautoga tane* (Niuean), *Kautonga* (Niuean), *Kautonga tane* (Niuean), *Koyya* (Malayalam, Tamil), *Koyyapazham* (Tamil), *Ku'ava* (Samoan), *Kuava* (Cook Islander, Fijian, Samoan, Tongan), *Ku'avu* (Samoan), *Kuawa* (Hawaiian), *Kuawa ke'oke'o* (Hawaiian), *Kuawa lemi* (Hawaiian), *Kuawa momono* (Hawaiian), *Mansala* (Sanskrit), *Ma-pun* (Thai), *Mbera* (Kikuyu), *Nggua* (Fijian), *Nguava* (Fijian), *Ói* (Vietnamese), *Pauwa* (Hawaiian), *Pera* (Singhalese), *Peyara* (Bengali), *Pineapple guava*, *Quwawa* (Fijian), *Tropical guava*, *Tu'ava* (Samoan), *Tuava* (French Polynesian), *Tu'avu* (Samoan), *Tumu tuava* (French Polynesian), *Tuvava* (French Polynesian), and *Yellow guava*.

*Guajava* is a local common name.

The bark scented with cinnamon oil has posed as cinnamon (*Cinnamomum verum*).

Guava had long been cultivated by the Inkas before the arrival of the European invaders in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century. In fact archaeologists have found traces of it in Peruvian sites dating to 800 BC and authorities believe that it was first cultivated in Peru. The plant is believed to have spread from its native home north to Mexico by 200 BC. Western Europeans first came across the fruit in Haiti.

Its introduction to other countries from the Middle and South American regions was initially due to Portuguese and Spanish traders. The former took the tree to India and the latter took it to the Philippines. In a new abode it is not always welcome as it spreads rapidly if it is uncontrolled. This is what happened in Hawaii and several native plants were said to be swamped.

In Hawaii guava provided a source of medicine. Diarrhoea was eased (especially in babies) by chewing the buds – and a root infusion was an ingredient in a potion taken to stem internal intestinal or bowel bleeding. Externally it was also included in various washes applied to sprains and deep wounds. While in contrast on the mainland, once guava had penetrated North America and become familiar to a few Indian tribes there, the fruit provided food for the Seminole tribe (who also used the wood to make their bows).

These small fragrant, black-spotted and sometimes green-mottled, yellow fruit are valued for their high Vitamin C content (as well as iron and calcium) and are usually made into jam or other preserves. The fruit can also be stewed.

In Malaysia the leaves with coconut milk (*Cocos nucifera*) are used to make 'air banyar' or 'putrid water' for dyeing silk black. In India the bark and leaves are used for tanning.

Locally in northern India twigs are used particularly to clean teeth.

The moderately hard, greyish-brown wood has been used for making gunstocks, mathematical instruments and tool handles. It has also been used for preparing charcoal and has been collected as firewood.

Medicinally, the roots have been used locally (particularly in west Africa) to treat dysentery and diarrhoea. In India the leaves have also been used internally to treat cholera (as well as dysentery and diarrhoea) and externally it has been applied to ulcers, other skin disorders and wounds.