

Solanum betacea

[Synonyms : *Cyphomandra betacea*, *Cyphomandra crassicaulis*, *Cyphomandra crassifolia*, *Cyphomandra procera*, *Pionandra betacea*, *Solanum crassifolia*, *Solanum insigne*]

TAMARILLO is an evergreen shrub or tree. Native to South America (particularly Brazil and Peru) it has small fragrant, greenish-pink flowers.

It is also known as *Baumtomate* (German), *Gas-Takkali* (Singhalese), Peruvian tomato tree, *Tomate en arbre* (French), *Tomateiro arbóreo* (Portuguese), *Tomatenbaum* (German), Tomato tree, *Trädtomat* (Swedish), *Trætomat* (Danish), and Tree tomato.

Betacea is derived from the genus name *Beta* meaning 'beet-like'.

Food historians believe that tamarillo was probably cultivated initially by Peruvian Indians before it was introduced to other countries.

Tamarillo is said to have been introduced to Sri Lanka in 1882 and it has also been introduced to some other tropical and subtropical countries. In the 1920s New Zealand began to cultivate tamarillo on a commercial scale and this led ultimately to exportation of the fruit in the 1960s to Pacific rim countries initially. It was the New Zealanders who christened the small reddish-yellow fruit 'tamarillo' in the 1970s when they found that 'tree tomato' (in common parlance until then) seemed to cause confusion and interfered with commercial acceptance.

The fruit (which are eaten raw or stewed) are made into jams, pickles and other preserves. In India they are also added to curries. For some it is viewed as an alternative to a tomato (*Solanum lycopersicum*).