PLANT FACT SHEET

Carissa macrocarpa (Ecklon) A. DC.

GENUS *Carissa* **FAMILY** Apocynaceae

COMMON NAMES Natal plum, Carissa, Large num-num

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit

The partly ripe fruits are used for jelly
Fully ripe fruit are used in pies or eaten fresh. The seeds can be eaten.
The fruit make good jam and chutney. They are used for juice.
Fruit can be frozen, dried or bottled for later use.

DESCRIPTION

A small evergreen shrub. It grows up to 5 m tall. It branches densely and has many forked spines. They are usually in pairs at the top of shoots. The branches are smooth and light brown. branches exude milky latex when cut. The leaves are produced opposite one another. They are simple leaves with short stalks. The leaves are oval and shiny. The top surface is dark green and the lower surface is paler green. The leaf has a thorn like tip. The flowers are in clusters at the ends of twigs. The flowers are 5 cm across and white. They have a sweet smell. The flowers a like tubes and the petals spread out. The fruit are oval red berries. They are 2.5-5 cm long. They are produced on the tips of young shoots. Seeds are flat and papery. The number of seeds varies. The fruit are edible.

HABITAT

A subtropical and tropical plant. The plant grows in warm moist tropical regions. It will also grow in the dry subtropics if temperatures do not reach freezing. They can survive drought. They will grow on sandy soils. They do best on well drained soils. They do best in full sunlight but can tolerate light shade. It suits hardiness zones 10-12. In Wittunga Botanical Gardens Adelaide.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

The plant can be grown from seed or cuttings. They can also be grown using layering or budding. Cuttings need to be put in soil with bottom heat to produce roots. To maintain good quality fruit, vegetative methods are best. Plants with shrubby growth habit normally are more productive than straggly types. Regular pruning helps increase fruit production by avoiding excessive branch growth. For use in hedges, plants are grown in nurseries then planted out 30 cm apart in staggered rows.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants grow rapidly under suitable conditions. Plants flower and fruit throughout most of the year. Most fruit occur in the summer months. A fruit weighs about 14 g.

NOTES

There about 20-37 Carissa species. All Carissa species bear edible fruit. They grow in the tropics and subtropics.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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