PLANT FACT SHEET

Prunus avium (L.) L

GENUS *Prunus* **FAMILY** Rosaceae

COMMON NAMES Sweet cherry, Bird cherry, Wild cherry

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Seeds, Leaves - flavouring, Sap

The fruit are eaten raw. They are also used for jam. They are also dried, stewed, used in pies, cakes, ice cream and pastries. They can be made into preserves or jelly.
Liqueurs are distilled from the fermented pulp. The stones were also crushed into the pulp.
Candied cherries are used in cakes and puddings.
The leaves are added to pickled cucumbers, apples and tomato for flavouring. The leaves are used for sarma in Turkey. They are rolled around a filling of rice or minced meat.
The gum from the bark can be eaten. It is allowed to solidify and eaten as a children's snack.

DESCRIPTION

A medium sized tree. It grows to 10-20 m high. It is spreading and loses its leaves during the year. The bark is silver grey and peels in circular strips. The leaves are alternate. The leaves are bronze when they open, turn dark green then change to crimson in autumn. The leaves are oval and double toothed. The upper surface is dull dark green. They are hairy underneath where the veins join. The leaf stalk is red and grooved. The flowers are pink and white. They occur in small clusters. The fruit are small and red-black when ripe. They are 25 mm across. They are sweet and juicy. There are at least 1,000 different forms of sweet cherry.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It is native to Europe. It can tolerate frosts except at flowering. It needs well drained soils. It needs adequate moisture during fruit development. In India it is grown between 2,000-2,500 m altitude. It needs 1,100-1,600 chilling hours below 7°C during winter. A pH of 6.5-7 is best. It suits hardiness zones 3-9.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Seeds need to be treated with cold by putting in a refrigerator for 3-4 months before sowing. They should be sown 5 cm deep. They may still take a year to germinate. Seedlings can be budded from better fruuting trees. Tongue grafting is used. Larger fruit often lack flavour. It requires cross pollination so 2 or more cultivars are planted together. Suitable pollinating varieties have to be chosen. A spacing of 4 m is suitable. Trees are pruned to produce 4 or 5 widely spaced branches. Bearing trees need little pruning. Fruit are produced on spurs of one year old wood. These can produce for 10-12 years.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees produce in 3-4 years. Trees last about 45 years. Fruit are hand picked when ripe. A tree can produce 18-20 kg of fruit.

NOTES

There are about 200 Prunus species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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