PLANT FACT SHEET

Prunus domestica L.

GENUS *Prunus* **FAMILY** Rosaceae

COMMON NAMES European plum

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Flowers, Fruit, Gum, Oil, Seeds, Flowers - tea, Leaves

The ripe fruit are eaten raw.
They are also stewed, and made into jelly and jam and juice.
Dried fruit are called prunes. They are used in baked muffins, cookies, cakes and some breads.
They are cooked for plum puddings.
They are distilled for alcoholic drinks. Caution: Alcohol is a cause of cancer.
The flowers are eaten as a garnish for salads and also brewed into tea.

DESCRIPTION

A small deciduous tree. It grows 6-10 m high. The young twigs are hairy. The bark is grey-brown and becomes cracked with age. The leaves have stalks. They are alternate. The leaves are 2-7 cm long by 0.7-3.5 cm wide. They are oval and taper to the tip. They have fine teeth. The base is rounded. The flowers are white. The fruit are round. They are golden yellow, green, red or dark purple. They have a waxy bloom. Fruit can be 7.5 cm long. The stone is large and rough or pitted. There are many cultivated varieties.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. In Nepal it grows between 1200-2000 m altitude. It needs 1,000-1,200 hours of chilling below 7°C during the dormant period. They do best with 90-110 cm annual and well-distributed rainfall. A well drained soil and a pH of 5.5-6.8 is best. It suits hardiness zones 5-9.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed or stem cuttings. It does not need pruning to produce fruit each year. They are often grafted. Plants can be spaced 6 m apart. Fruit develop on spurs and side shoots one year old. Trees are pruned to renew spurs.

Harvesting and Seed Production

A tree starts to bear after about 5 years and produces for about 20 years. A tree may produce 65-70 kg of fruit.

NOTES

There are about 200 Prunus species. It is an ancient cross between Cherry plum (Prunus cerasifera) and possibly the sloe (Prunus spinosa) and/or the damson plum (Prunus insititia).

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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French, B.R. & Maynard, A.R. Food Plants International Database. Food Plants International

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