PLANT FACT SHEET

# *Syzygium cumini* (L.) Skeels

**GENUS** *Syzygium* **FAMILY** Myrtaceae

**COMMON NAMES** Java plum, Jambolan

## EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

**Edible parts:** Fruit, Leaves, Flowers - drink

The ripe fruit are eaten raw.
Rubbing it with salt is sometimes used for poorer fruit. Or they are soaked in salt water. Fruit are also used for vinegar (unripe fruit) and for wine (ripe fruit). They can be used for making jelly or jam.
The young leaves are eaten.

## DESCRIPTION

A medium sized evergreen tree. It grows 10-30 m tall. The stem is erect and branching. The leaves are opposite and smooth. They are shiny, leathery and somewhat oval shaped. The leaves are 4.5-16.5 cm long by 2-8 cm wide. The flowers are pink or nearly white and occur on compound flower arrangements below the leaves. The fruit is oval with dark purple flesh and is green but develops a nearly black skin when ripe. Fruit can be 2.5 cm long or more. The pulp is purplish-white and juicy. They are fleshy and have a large greenish seed. The fruit is edible.

## HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It grows in the lowlands. They are common and widely distributed throughout the Philippines, India and Indonesia. The plant prefers a well composted soil which is moist and well drained. It needs a protected position and prefers part shade. It is drought and frost tender. In valleys in the Himalayas trees grow up to 1300 m above sea level. In the tropics they grow to 2000 m altitude. Trees can tolerate some flooding. It requires a good rainfall or adequate watering. It can grow on alkaline soils, salty soils and marshy lands. Once established trees can stand strong winds. It grows in Miombo woodland in Africa. It suits hardiness zones 11-12. In XTBG Yunnan.

## PRODUCTION

### Cultivation

It is grown from fresh seed. Seeds normally germinate well within 2-3 weeks. Seed can only be stored for about a month. It can also be grown from tip cuttings. Trees can be cut back and will regrow or they can be heavily pruned into a hedge. It is best to select better quality fruit then grow them from cuttings or by air layering. For air layering, using growth substances is recommended. Budding can also be used. Seedlings vary in fruit quality. Almost seedless fruit can be selected. Seeds should be sown 4-5 cm deep and putting them in pots makes transplanting easiest. Some seeds produce several shoots or seedlings and the ones produced by cell tissue

breed more true.
Trees are planted 10 m apart. Budded trees are smaller and can be 8 m apart. Trees can be pruned to give one main stem and 4-5 main branches. Flowers are cross pollinated by honey bees so keeping bee hives in the orchard helps fruit sett.

### Harvesting and Seed Production

It grows quickly after the first year. It can reach 12 m tall in 12 years. Trees start bearing fruit when 4-6 years old. Trees can last for 70 years. There is usually one main flowering period in the spring, but there can be minor times of flowering. Several months are taken between flowering and ripe fruit being ready. It is normally 120-150 days. The fruit does not ripen after being harvested so fruit need to be picked when ripe. Flower and fruit drop can be reduced with sprays of Giberellic acid. A tree can yield 60-70 kg of fruit.

## 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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