PLANT FACT SHEET

Manilkara bidentata subsp. surinamensis (Miquel)

Pennington

GENUS *Manilkara* **FAMILY** Sapotaceae

COMMON NAMES Black balata, Chicle

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Latex

The latex has been used as a source of chicle for chewing gum.
The fruit is oily and eaten.

DESCRIPTION

A shrub or small tree. It is sometimes 1-2 m high. In the rainforest it can grow 40 m high. It then often has buttresses. The bark is greyish brown and deeply cracked. The plant has lots of sticky white sap. The leaves are 7-21 cm long and usually sword shaped and rounded at the tip. The leaf stalk is 2.5 cm long. The tree loses its leaves for a short period of time just before flowering. The new leaves and flowers develop together. The flowers are greenish-white. The fruit ripens reddish-purple to black. The fruit are edible.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is native to the southern Caribbean. It grows from sea level to 1500 m altitude. It grows in lowland forests which are occasionally flooded. It can grow in dry forest in white sand. It suits hardiness zones 11-12.

NOTES

There are about 80 Manilkara species. There are 30 species in tropical America.

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