

Miracle Fruit



Scientific names: [*Synsepalum dulcificum*](#), [*Synsepalum subcordatum*](#)

Family: Sapotaceae

Common name: Miracle Fruit

Origin: Ghana (Tropical West Africa)

Hardiness:

Hardy to about 32F. Plants will show a slow decline in cooler temperatures (below 55F) and prefer a year-round warm climate.

Description:

It is one of the strangest tropical fruits. The most unusual thing about it is the effect it has on one's taste after this miraculous berry has been consumed. The “miracle” is that if lemon or other sour food is eaten after the miracle fruit, the sour tastes sweet, as if sugar has been added. That kind of magical experience is unforgettable! The interest in this plant is so high that anyone who has a plant always finds eager volunteers to test its sweetening properties. A natural chemical in the fruit masks the tongue's sour taste buds so that lemons taste like lemonade or lemon pie, or lemon candy. What causes the miracle? The fruit has a unique taste changing glycoprotein that inhibits tastebuds' perception of sour taste. The sweet sensation lasts for half an hour to a few hours.

This small, evergreen shrub grows very slowly to a height of 4-6 ft in container, and 10-15 ft in natural habitat. Eventual size depends on where the plant is grown; a 10 years old plant might be easily only 4-5 feet tall. It forms an oval to pyramidal shaped bush or small tree.

Inconspicuous brown-and-white 1/2 inch flowers are followed by bright scarlet, 1 inch football-shaped fruit, sweet and pleasant tasting. Most of the fruit is taken up by a single large seed, but the pulp around it can be nibbled off and then for the next hour or so, anything one eats

that is sour has a sweet flavor. The plant starts fruiting when only 1 ft tall. It produces fruit practically year around. In native habitat, two large crops are available yearly, each after a rainy season. The mature bushes usually have a few fruits hanging around all year. Seed to fruit in 2 to 3 years. Flower to fruit in 30 to 45 days.

There are 2 known species of *synsepalum* that carry miracle fruits. *Synsepalum dulcificum* is a smaller-leaf version (leaves are narrow), and is somewhat slower growing plant. *Synsepalum subcordatum* (Giant Miracle Fruit) is a larger leaf variety, and grows into a small tree. The fruit are slightly bigger than those of *s. dulcificum*, and are produced more profusely, especially in first years. With age, the fruit crop amounts of these two species become about the same.

Cultivation:

If planted in alkaline limestone based soils, the plant may die. These plants seem to live for acid, thriving in it, and then converting it! They must have rich, well-drained soils that are acid in pH, with lots of peat moss, and require constant supply of micronutrients. On alkaline soils they often are grown in large containers with generous amounts of peat moss for sustained success in fruiting.

It makes an excellent container tree, which gives it the added benefit of mobility. Since it is so easily containerized, almost anyone can grow this plant whether they have an outside planting area or not. Miracle fruit can be a rewarding indoor plant. It is not a fast growing plant, which is another benefit for those who would like to grow it in their house or greenhouse. It thrives under warm temperatures, and high humidity. A 10 inch plant is happy in a one gallon pot. One that size will flower and fruit at least twice a year, probably more frequently.

Miracle Fruit thrives best in partial shade. When plants are small they are subject to frost damage, so they should be container-grown and kept indoors or moved to protected locations when frost or freeze threatens. Older plants may sustain some leaf and minor twig damage, but may sustain cooler temperatures without being killed. Although not thought to be frost tolerant, the *synsepalum* plants have been observed growing in Florida in protected from wind locations as far north as Tampa.

When propagating miracle fruit, sow the seeds in a rich, well-drained medium, just barely covered, and water lightly every other day. Seeds generally come up in about eight to ten weeks, but grow slowly the first year, often being only two to three inches tall at the end of almost one year of growth. It really takes three to four years before the plants reach a height of more than fifteen to twenty inches, and then they start to grow more rapidly. However, when growing this plant from seed, be prepared to wait for a few years until you can enjoy the first fruit. If possible, it is always recommended to get a mature full specimen, at least 1 ft tall, that is ready to bloom.

Growing in half soil-half peat works well and plants will benefit considerably from occasional applications of acidic fertilizer. Will tolerate minimal frost when full grown, but plants need lots of water year round. The miracle fruit cannot be grown outside in the United States except Southern Florida,

Propagation:

Propagation is by seeds. Seeds should not be dried out before planting. The seeds have limited viability and cannot be dried or stored for very long.

Uses:

The unique properties of miracle fruit have been used for an appetite stimulation of persons taking chemotherapy medicines to help them to remove the metallic taste and return the desire for food. Miracle Fruit is a great sweet enhancer for dieters. Berries are eaten fresh.

The fruits themselves are of interest as a commercial source of artificial sweetener; however, large quantities of berries are needed to collect a substantial amount of the sweetener. The problem is how to increase the shelf life of the product. The berries are perishable, and once picked, last only a few days. Methods of shipment are not conducive to marketing the fruits and commercial cultivation of the plants was unsuccessful so far.

Miracle Fruit enhances flavor of grapefruit. A heavenly breakfast will be provided by a single Miracle Fruit berry before your morning grapefruit!

It is unfortunate that heat destroys the active principle, so that canning, jams, preserves, baking, drying, etc. are impossible. The fruits can be held for a short period of time by refrigeration or freezing.

https://toptropicals.com/html/toptropicals/plant_wk/synsepalum.htm

<http://www.tradewindsfruit.com/content/miracle-fruit.htm>