

SURINAM CHERRY

Brazil Cherry, Brazilian Cherry, Cayenne Cherry, Pitanga, Pendanga, Guinda

Eugenia uniflora

Myrtaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Origin

The plant is native from Suriname, Guyana and French Guiana to southern Brazil (especially the states of Rio de Janeiro, Paraíba, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande), and to northern, eastern and central Uruguay.

Uses

This beautiful plant is used as an ornamental as hedgerows. The ripe fruits can be eaten straight from the tree. The fruit has a thin skin, the flesh is orange-red, very juicy. The leaves are spread over the floors of Brazilian homes so that when walked upon, they release their pungent oil which repels flies. The bark contains 20 to 28.5% tannin and can be used for treating leather. The flowers are a rich source of pollen for honeybees but yield little or no nectar.

Common Names

- Spanish
 - Surinam Cherry Cereza De Cayena
 - Cereza De Cayena
 - ñanga Piré
 - Cereza Quadrada

Cultivation

The shrub or tree, to 25 ft (7.5 m) high, has slender, spreading branches and resinously aromatic foliage. The Surinam Cherry is adapted to tropical and subtropical regions. It thrives from sea-level to 3,300 ft (1,000 m) up to 6,000 ft (1,800 m). Young plants are damaged by temperatures below 28° F (-2.22° C), but well-established plants have suffered only superficial injury at 22° F (-5.56° C). The plant revels in full sun. It requires only moderate rainfall and, being deep-rooted, can stand a long dry season. It grows in almost any type of soil and can even stand water logging for a time, but it is intolerant of salt. Seeds are the usual means of propagation. They remain viable for not much longer than a month and germinate in 3 to 4 weeks. It starts fruiting when the plant is 2 years old; some may delay fruiting for 5 or 6 years, or even 10 if in unfavorable situations. They are most productive if unpruned, but still produce a great many fruits when close-clipped in hedges. Quarterly feeding with a complete fertilizer formula promotes fruiting. The plant responds quickly to irrigation, the fruit rapidly becoming larger and sweeter in flavor after a good watering.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The fruits develop and ripen quickly, only 3 weeks after the flowers open. There are often two harvests per year coinciding with the spring and fall rains. The fruits should be picked only when they are so ripe as to fall into the hand at the lightest touch, otherwise they will be undesirably resinous. Gathering must be done daily or even twice a day. Seeds can be saved, are viable for a month and will germinate in 3-4 months

Pests and Diseases

Surinam Cherries are highly attractive to Caribbean and Mediterranean fruit flies. The foliage is occasionally attacked by scale insects and caterpillars.

Cooking and Nutrition

For table use, the fruits should be seeded and sprinkled with sugar before placing in the refrigerator. They will become mild and sweet and will exude much juice. They are an excellent addition to fruit cups, salads, pudding, ice cream and can be made into pies or preserved whole in syrup. In some countries, the cherry juice is fermented and made into vinegar, wine, and sometimes a distilled liquor.

References

Morton, J. 1987. Surinam Cherry. p. 386-388. In: Fruits of warm climates. Julia F. Morton, Miami, FL.

<http://ecocrop.fao.org/ecocrop/srv/en/cropView?id=6001>