

Ambarella

Botanical Name: *Spondias cytherea* (Anacardiaceae)

Common Name: Ambarella, Dwarf Golden Plum, Makok faring (in Thai), Pommier de Cythère (in French) Kedongdong (Indonesia and Malaysia, and Coc (in Vietnam.)

Origin: Indonesia and Malaysia

Distribution: Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Costa Rica, Columbia, Brazil, Tahiti, and from Puerto Rico to Trinidad in the West Indies.

Australian Distribution: In Queensland and Northern Territory, where a number of commercial orchards exist of the dwarf variety in Marrakai, Humpty Doo, Berry Springs and Darwin River.

Preferred Climate and Soil Types: The tree grows well in our warm Top End climate, and the dwarf bushy shrub prefers sun as opposed to shade where fruit production will be affected. The tall cultivar branches are easily broken by strong winds and may require a sheltered location. They are drought tolerant, and may briefly lose their leaves under stress. In general, the Ambarellas can grow in a wide variety of soil types.

Description: This is the dwarf variety, a small semi-deciduous shrub that grows to about 2.5 metres. Fruits are egg-sized, and when ripe they become orange-yellow in colour and sour-sweet in flavour and produce a single sharp, rather large, spiny seed. Widely grown in the tropical regions, the fruit can be eaten fresh and used in cooking. This tree is easy to grow from seeds and can be used as a landscape tree in urban environments.

Varieties: Two varieties exist. One is tall to 9 metres, the other, a dwarf variety, introduced to Australia by a Northern Territory Fruit Growers study tour group shortly after it was discovered in Northern Borneo some 25 years ago. This is the dominant cultivar in the NT. A prolific bearer growing to 2.5 metres.

Culture: The tree is propagated from seed. The dwarf variety will fruit within twelve months. Seed viability varies. The bark is light greyish brown and quite smooth. Its whitish flowers produced on large loose panicles are often cut in half by commercial growers so as to produce larger fruit. The *Spondias* species are best adapted to the hot, lowland tropics. Supplementary irrigation is desirable in establishment, although mature trees are tolerant of drought conditions. Maintenance pruning to remove dead or damaged wood is all that is required.

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Pests and Diseases: Sooty mould on the fruit is easily wiped or washed off. In Indonesia, the leaves are severely attacked by the larvae of the kedongdong spring-beetle, *Podontia affinis*.

Fruiting Season: Almost all year round

Harvesting: The fruit is harvested green for the Asian commercial market whilst Europeans prefer the ripe fruit harvested when yellow or when there is colour change and allowed to ripen in a few days. The fresh or dried fruit can be made into jellies, sauces or preserves. Often stewed and used as a replacement for apple on roast pork. It is a good source of minerals and vitamin C. Fresh leaves are added to curries, stews and salads.



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