

Carissa

Carissa macrocarpa

Noem-Noem



Carissa macrocarpa also known as **Natal plum big num-num, Amatungulu and grootnoem-noem** is native to South Africa and is also planted in some parts of America. It is a member of the Dogbane or Apocynaceae family. Fruit can be eaten fresh or can also be cooked. People enjoy the Carissa fruit raw or in jellies, jams, pies, and sauces. They taste like a slightly sweet cranberry with the texture of a ripe strawberry, but many people say like a slightly unripe cherry. The entire plant except for its red colored fruit is poisonous. Only the fruit of this plant is edible and though it is called a plum it hardly tastes like one. The fruit is low in cholesterol, sodium free, and vitamin C, B1, B2, A, calcium, protein, iron, magnesium, potassium, phosphorus, sodium, copper and is low in fat.

Carissa can be difficult to grow because the plant exudes a milky sap when cut or broken, which worsens harvest and transportation of the fruits because they can easily be damaged. And the berries

have a short shelf life because the sap clots. Not only is the crop a valuable source for nutrition, it became a huge source of income for African farmers and has the potential to do well in a global market.

Plant

Carissa is a hardy, evergreen, spiny and indigenous shrub that grows as high as 7 feet (about 2 meters) and as wide as 10 feet (about 3 meters). The plant thrives well throughout the tropical and subtropical climates and grows wild on the poorest and rockiest soils and is grown as a hedge plant in dry, sandy or rocky soils. It is most fruitful on deep, fertile, well-drained soil but if the soil is too wet, there will be excessive vegetative growth and lower fruit production. It has many branch, spiny twigs; latex milky. Stems are generally thorny with forked spines.

Leaves

The plant has ovate leaves that are dark green with a glossy sheen. They are usually 1-3 inch long and are formed along the branch in an opposite arrangement

History

As its name recommends, Natal plum is native to Natal, South Africa. According to the book, "Lost Crops of Africa," Carissa species of Africa stretch from Senegal to Sudan, and Ethiopia to South Africa. The fruit was transported to the Philippines in the early 1900s, though it is not common to see the plum in south Asia. Its close cousin, the karonda (*Carissa carandas*), originated in India and thus appears in the country with greater frequently.

Today, the fruit continues to grow throughout parts of Africa and in warm regions of the US, like California, Hawaii and Florida. Attempts were made to introduce the shrub to Israel, but it didn't fruit.

Traditional uses and benefits of Carissa

- It is enriched with iron component and is beneficial for anemic patients.
- It is also used to cure the effects of Scurvy.
- It prevents excessive secretion of bile by liver and prevents biliousness.
- It provides comfort during diarrhea.
- It effectively reduces fever.
- It regulates and optimizes the heart functions to avoid heart disease.
- Being depressant in nature, it diminishes excitability to cure Anxiety.
- It is recommended during constipation to get relief.
- It strengthens and tones stomach and keep stomach related problems away.
- It is beneficial to stop internal bleeding.
- It mitigates cough.
- It removes impurities from the blood.
- It is favorable in reducing the blood sugar level and aids in curing Diabetes.
- Ripe fruit is taken as an antiscorbutic and remedy for biliousness.
- Leaf decoction is valued in cases of intermittent fever, diarrhea, oral inflammation and earache.
- Root is used as a bitter stomachic and vermifuge and it is an ingredient in a remedy for itches.
- Roots contain salicylic acid and cardiac glycosides causing a slight decrease in blood pressure.

Ayurvedic Benefits of Carissa

- **Ascaris:** Consume 10 ml of root decoction of Carissa twice a day.
- **Biliousness:** Consume 4g unripe fruit of Carissa once a day.
- **Fever:** Make Leave decoction of Carissa. Drink a cup of it twice a day.
- **Internal bleeding:** Eat 10 g ripe fruit of Carissa once a day. It helps to cure internal bleeding.

- **Appetite:** Fresh fruit juice of Carissa is consumed in a dose of 10-15 ml to improve the appetite and digestion.
- **Micturition:** The decoction of the root is given in a dose of 30-40 ml to treat difficulty in micturition.
- **Cardiac muscles:** Fresh juice of the fruit of Carissa is consumed daily in dose of 15-20 ml to strengthen the cardiac muscles.
- **Wounds:** Paste prepared from the leaf or bark is applied over wounds for its treatment.
- **Diabetic ulcer:** Paste of the root is applied over the diabetic ulcer



Culinary Uses

- Fruit can be eaten out of hand or made into pies, jams, jellies, and sauces.
- It can also be used in desserts, yogurt, ice cream etc.
- Fold in chopped natal plums into sweet bread recipes.
- Make a pie filling by adding 1 cup of sugar and 1 cup of water with 2 pints of sliced natal plums. Place pie pastry on top and bake.

- Add diced Natal plum to salads with apple, raisin, vegan cheese, and a dark green like spinach.
- Make a preserve by steaming natal plums. Alongside this process, mix sugar and water at high heat. Transfer the steamed, softened plums to the concoction and cook until the thick consistency resembles the texture of apple butter. Note: slightly unripe fruits are best for preserving.
- Make pickled plums by boiling the fruit, removing them, and then adding flavors like zesty masala, lemon juice, and oil.
- The dark juice makes for a nice coloring to beverages and soups, and adds a pinch of sweetness, too.
- Overripe fruits may be processed into vinegar.

Storing Natal plum

Being a thin-skinned fruit, fully ripe natal plums bruise easily and must be handled with care. Do not store too many in a bag on top of the other; rather, place them on a paper towel-lined tray with no more than two layers, and put in the refrigerator. These fruits have a short shelf life on account of the sap congealing: Expect a lifespan of no more than a week.



