

Chrysophyllum cainito

Star Apple, Caimito



Origin

West Indies and Central America

Description

The star apple is mostly appreciated as a fruit tree in home landscapes. It is a beautiful tree, making a perfect tree for landscaping in South Florida. The canopy opens forming an umbrella shape where the underside leaves shine with a golden brown color, while the upper side shines with an emerald green color.

Food Uses

The fruits are delicious as a fresh dessert fruit. The ripe fruit, preferably chilled, may be merely cut in half and the flesh spooned out, leaving the seed cells and core. The sweet fruits are eaten raw and in desserts and salads. They are also boiled and made into preserves. An interesting drink called "matrimony" is prepared by scooping out the inside pulp of a star apple and adding it to a glass of sour orange juice.

The peel and rind of ripe caimito are inedible. Cutting the fruit transversely and then gently separating the two halves is an easy way to open the fruit.

Medicinal Properties

The fruit pulp is used to soothe inflammation in laryngitis and pneumonia. It is given as a treatment for diabetes mellitus, and as a decoction is gargled to relieve angina.



In Venezuela, the slightly unripe fruits are eaten to overcome intestinal disturbances. In excess, they cause constipation. Tea from the leaves is used to treat chest and lung congestion. The bark is extremely bitter and is drunk as a tonic and stimulant, and is taken to halt diarrhea, dysentery and hemorrhages, and as a treatment for gonorrhea. The crushed seeds are eaten as a tonic, diuretic and to bring down fever. In Brazil, the latex of the tree is applied on wounds and, when dried and powdered, is given to cure worms.

Other Uses

The latex obtained by making incisions in the bark coagulates readily and has been utilized as an adulterant of gutta percha. It was formerly proposed as a substitute for wax on the shelves of wardrobes and closets.

