

Morton, J. 1987. Grumichama. p. 390–391. In: Fruits of warm climates. Julia F. Morton, Miami, FL.

Grumichama

Eugenia brasiliensis Lam.

Eugenia dombeyi Skeels

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An often admired but still very minor fruiting member of the Myrtaceae, the grumichama, *Eugenia brasiliensis* Lam. (syn. *E. dombeyi* Skeels), is also called *grumixama*, *grumichameira*, or *grumixameira* in Brazil, and sometimes Brazil cherry elsewhere.

Description

The highly ornamental tree is slender, erect, usually to 25 or 35 ft (7.5-10.5 m) high, short-trunked and heavily foliated with opposite, oblong-oval leaves 3 1/2 to 5 in (9-16 cm) long, 2 3/8 in (5-6 cm) wide, with recurved margin; glossy, thick, leathery, and minutely pitted on both surfaces. They persist for 2 years. New shoots are rosy. The flowers, borne singly in the leaf axils, are 1 in (2.5 cm) wide; have 4 green sepals and 4 white petals, and about 100 white stamens with pale-yellow anthers. The long-stalked fruit is oblate, 1/2 to 3/4 in (1.25-2 cm) wide; turns from green to bright-red and finally dark-purple to nearly black as it ripens, and bears the persistent, purple- or red-tinted sepals, to 1/2 in (1.25 cm) long, at its apex. The skin is thin, firm and exudes dark-red juice. The red or white pulp is juicy and tastes much like a true subacid or sweet cherry except for a touch of aromatic resin. There may be 1 more or less round, or 2 to 3 hemispherical, hard, light-tan or greenish-gray seeds to 1/2 in (1.25 cm) wide and half as thick.

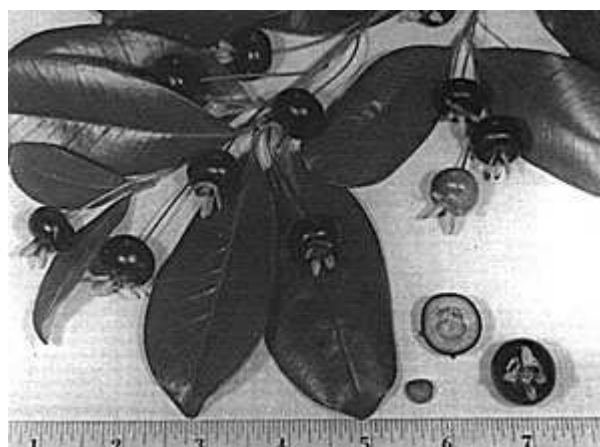


Fig. 105: The grumichama (*Eugenia brasiliensis*) is more cherry-like than many so-called "cherries" but handicapped by small size, apical sepals and large seeds.

Origin and Distribution

The grumichama is native and wild in coastal southern Brazil, especially in the states of Parana and Santa

Catarina. It is cultivated in and around Rio de Janeiro, also in Paraguay. A specimen was growing in Hope Gardens, Jamaica, in 1880 and a tree was planted in the Botanical Gardens, Singapore, in 1888, fruited in 1903. It has long since vanished from both of these locations. An attempt to grow it in the Philippines in the early 1920's did not meet with success. Neither did a trial in Israel. An early introduction, perhaps by Don Francisco de Paula Marin in 1791, was made in Hawaii and the tree was adopted into numerous local gardens.

The United States Department of Agriculture received seeds from Mauritius in 1911 (S.P.I. #30040); plants and seeds from Bahia, Brazil, in 1914 (S.P.I. #36968), and more seeds from Mauritius in 1922 (S.P.I. #54797). Plants were set out at the Plant Introduction Station in Miami and prospered. Other plantings were made in California where it seemed even better adapted but has apparently disappeared. The United States Department of Agriculture raised seedlings at Puerto Arturo, Honduras, and transferred some plants to the Lancetilla Experimental Garden at Tela in 1926. They flourished there and flowered and fruited well.

Over the years there have been mild efforts to encourage interest in the virtues of the grumichama in Florida, mainly because of the beauty and hardiness of the tree and the pleasant flavor of the fruit but the sepals are a nuisance and there is too little flesh in proportion to seed for the fruit to be taken seriously.

Varieties

Variety *leucocarpus* Berg. in Brazil becomes a large tree to 65 ft (20 m) high and has fruits with white flesh. It is not as common as the red-fleshed type.

Climate

The grumichama is subtropical, surviving temperatures of 26° F (-3.33° C) in Brazil. It is better suited to Palm Beach than to southern Florida. In Hawaii, the tree fruits best from sea-level to an altitude of no more than 300 ft (90 m).

Soil

The grumichama does better on acid sand in Central Florida than it does on limestone in the south. It is reported to prefer deep, fertile, sandy loam. Sturrock says it grows well in rich clay in Cuba but is adversely affected by the long, dry season.

Propagation

Wilson Popenoe stated that propagation in Brazil is entirely by seeds which remain viable for several weeks and germinate in about a month. Fenzi says that seeds, cuttings and air-layers are employed, and Sturrock has mentioned that grafting is easy.

Culture

The grumichama is of slow growth when young unless raised in a mixture of peat moss and sand and then given a thick layer of peat moss around the roots when setting out, and kept heavily fertilized. In Hawaii, it has taken 7 years to reach 7 ft. Fruiting begins when the plants are 4 to 5 years old.

Season

The tree is regarded as remarkable for the short period from flowering to fruiting. In Florida, it has been in full bloom in late April and loaded with fruits 30 days later. The crop ripens quickly over just a few days. In Hawaii, the trees bloom and fruit from July to December, with the main crop in the fall. Trees in Brazil vary considerably in time of flowering and fruiting so that the overall season extends from November to February.

Pests

In Hawaii, the fruits are heavily attacked by the Mediterranean fruit fly.

Food Uses

Fully ripe grumichamas are pleasant to nibble out-of-hand. In Hawaii, half-ripe fruits are made into pie, jam or jelly.

Food Value Per 100 g of Edible Portion*

Moisture	83.5 g
Protein	0.102 g
Fiber	0.6 g
Ash	0.43 g
Calcium	39.5 mg
Phosphorus	13.6 mg
Iron	0.45 mg
Carotene	0.039 mg
Thiamine	0.044 mg
Riboflavin	0.031 mg
Niacin	0.336 mg
Ascorbic Acid	18.8 mg

*Analyses made in Honduras.

Medicinal Uses

The bark and leaves contain 1.5% of essential oil. The leaf or bark infusion—1/3 oz (10 g) of plant material in 10 1/2 oz (300 g) water—is aromatic, astringent, diuretic and taken as a treatment for rheumatism at the rate of 2 to 4 cups daily, in Brazil.

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