

# Spondias purpurea

*Spondias purpurea* is a species in flowering plant in the cashew family, *Anacardiaceae*, that is native to tropical regions of the Americas. It is most commonly known as **jocote**, which derives from the Nahuatl word *xocotl*, meaning any kind of sour or acidic fruit.<sup>[1]</sup> Other common names include **red mombin**, **purple mombin**,<sup>[2]</sup> **hog plum**, **ciruela huesito** (Venezuela), **sineguela**, **siriguela**; and **jobito** (Ecuador).

## 1 Description



Fruits of *Spondias purpurea*.



*Sineguelas* from the Philippines

It is a small to medium-sized tree up to 7 m (23 ft) tall. The leaves are deciduous in the short dry season, but only fall shortly before the new leaves develop; they are pinnate, with 7-23 leaflets, each leaflet 3–5 cm long and 1.5–2 cm broad. The flowers are small, reddish-purple, produced in large panicles. The fruit is an edible oval drupe,

3–5 cm long and 2-3.5 cm broad, ripening red (occasionally yellow) and containing a single large seed.

It is now widely cultivated in tropical regions throughout the world for its edible fruit, and is also naturalised in some areas, including the Philippines and Nigeria. Numerous cultivars have been selected for fruit quality. It is also abundant in Jamaica and Central America. In Florida growth is relegated to near-tropical areas of the state, and the tree is killed or greatly harmed by cold winter temperatures from Palm Beach County northward.<sup>[3]</sup>

In Ecuador it is propagated by planting trunks. Seedlings are green when not ripe but enjoyed by locals by adding sea salt. The ripe fruit is red and is very sweet to the taste.

The fruits are often eaten ripe, with or without the skin. It is sometimes eaten unripe with salt and vinegar or lime juice, commonly sold in the streets in most Central American countries in plastic bags; also available are red hot pepper sauce and “alhuaishte” (very fine ground toasted pumpkin seeds).

In Haiti, it is known under the name of 'siwèl' and spread throughout the mountainous areas of the country, mostly in the northern and southern mountain ranges.

One typical dish in Salvadoran cuisine consists of a syrup made of *panela* (is a molasses made from artisan sugar blocks made by boiling cane juice from a *molienda* [cane crushing station traditionally ran by oxen or currently with portable gas engines], to evaporate water until it achieves thick molasses consistency. Then poured into wood molds and let it cool down. Once solidified later are wrapped in dry corn husk leaves called “*tuzas*” and sold in the markets], *jocote* and mango. This can be found only during the harvest season for these fruits starting around *Semana Santa* (Easter) to end of August.

The single large seed, which takes up most of the fruit, is not eaten

In Panamá AND Coastal Ecuador, the tree is used throughout the countryside as a living fence.

## 2 Cultural significance

The “Pacto del Jocote”, peace treaty was signed in Costa Rica on April 11, 1842 under a *jocote* tree in Alajuela between Francisco Morazán and Vicente Villaseñor overturning the government of Braulio Carrillo.



Ripe jocote and seed once pulp has been eaten



"Sirgüelas" or plums in syrup, Oaxaca, México

## 4 External links

- Miller, A and Schall, B. 2005. Domestication of a Mesoamerican cultivated fruit tree, *Spondias purpurea*. *PNAS* 102:12801–12806
- Purple mombin

## 3 References

- [1] Spanish Royal Academy Dictionary
- [2] "*Spondias purpurea*". Natural Resources Conservation Service PLANTS Database. USDA. Retrieved 27 November 2015.
- [3] Boning, Charles R. (2006). *Florida's Best Fruiting Plants: Native and Exotic Trees, Shrubs, and Vines*. Sarasota, Florida: Pineapple Press, Inc. pp. 150–151.

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