

Natal Plum (*Carissa macrocarpa*)

By: Ben Richardson



Classification



- ❧ Family: Apocynaceae
- ❧ Genus: *Carissa*
- ❧ Species: *C. macrocarpa*
- ❧ Common name: Large Num Num (South Africa), Natal Plum, *Amatungulu* (Uganda) and *Noem-Noem* (Afrikaans)
- ❧ Relatives: Conkerberry, *Karonda*, Sand num-num, and Oleander.

Distribution



- ❧ Grows mainly in coastal regions of South Africa.
- ❧ Grows in sand dunes and on the edges of coastal forests from Natal to Mozambique.
- ❧ Today it commonly grows in Southern Florida and is cultivated in California.

Biological Aspects



- ❧ Leaves- ovate, rounded base, acute apex and lateral inconspicuous veins.
- ❧ Trunk- many branches and spiny twigs.
- ❧ Flowers- large and white, fragrant, solitary and terminal.
- ❧ Fruits- purplish-red, oblong to rotund and has a milky juice.

Features of Cultivation



- ☞ Quite easy to grow.
- ☞ Seeds germinate in 2 to 4 weeks after sowing.
- ☞ Plants will begin to bear fruits within first 2 years.
- ☞ Need a standard and balanced fertilizer for best fruit growth.

Environmental Requirements

- ☞ Up to 1000 mm/year of rainfall
- ☞ Plants are drought resistant
- ☞ 1000 meters but up to 1500 meters for best growth
- ☞ Cold tolerant to -5 degrees Celsius
- ☞ Tolerates up to 32 degrees Celsius, best growth in full sun exposure
- ☞ Any soil is good, as long as it drains well
- ☞ Salt tolerant up to 5000 ppm

Plant Uses



- ❧ This plant is used for its large fruits that it produces. The fruit is used for many things such as jams and jellies.
- ❧ Natal Plum plants have also been used for Bonsai Trees.
- ❧ The Natal Plum is used in quite a few medicinal ways, it is used to prevent anemia and to build hemoglobin.

North American and Native American Uses



∞ There are no Native uses because the plant was not cultivated in North America until

Facts



- ❧ The plant of the Natal Plum is actually known to be extremely poisonous.
- ❧ According to a study done in 2011, isolates from the natal plum's stem inhibited proliferation of Leukemia cells.
- ❧ Natal plums have potential for wound healing because of their strong antimicrobial properties.
- ❧ In 2012, it was shown that taking an extract from the natal plum can help to significantly lower your blood pressure.