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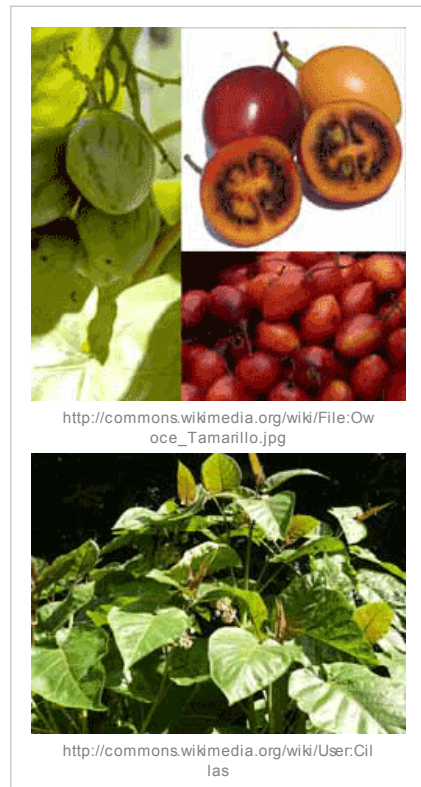
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## Cyphomandra betacea - (Cav.)Sendtn.

<b>Common Name</b>	Tree Tomato
<b>Family</b>	<b>Solanaceae</b>
<b>Synonyms</b>	C. crassicaulis. (Ortega.)Kuntze.
<b>Known Hazards</b>	The unripe fruit is slightly toxic[200].
<b>Habitats</b>	Dry soils at forest margins[200]. Open forests at medium to high altitudes[260].
<b>Range</b>	S. America - Peru.
<b>Edibility Rating</b>	
<b>Medicinal Rating</b>	
<b>Care</b>	



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### Summary

### Physical Characteristics



Cyphomandra betacea is an evergreen Tree growing to 5 m (16ft) by 4 m (13ft) at a fast rate.

It is hardy to zone 9 and is frost tender. It is in leaf 12-Jan. The flowers are hermaphrodite (have both male and female organs) and are pollinated by Insects, self. The plant is self-fertile.

Suitable for: light (sandy), medium (loamy) and heavy (clay) soils and prefers well-drained soil. Suitable pH: acid, neutral and basic (alkaline) soils. It cannot grow in the shade. It prefers moist soil.

### Habitats

Woodland Garden Sunny Edge; South Wall. By. West Wall. By.

### Edible Uses

Edible Parts: [Fruit](#).  
Edible Uses:

Fruit - raw or cooked[3, 46, 61]. The flavour can vary considerably from tree to tree, the best forms are juicy and sub-acid, they are eaten out of hand, added to salads, used in preserves, jams, jellies etc[183, 196]. The fruit contains about 150 IU vitamin A per 100g, 25mg vitamin C, it is rich in vitamin E and iron but low in carbohydrate[196]. Fruits are 4 - 10cm long and 3 - 5cm wide[196].

### Medicinal Uses

*Plants For A Future can not take any responsibility for any adverse effects from the use of plants. Always seek advice from a professional before using a plant medicinally.*

None known

### Other Uses

None known

### Cultivation details

Succeeds in a sunny position in any well-drained soil[196, 200]. Prefers a light fertile soil[196]. Dislikes drought[196]. Plants are very prone to wind damage[196]. They fruit best with a temperature range of 16 - 22°C in the growing season[196]. The tree tomato is cultivated for its edible fruit in sub-tropical and tropical zones[46, 61], there are some named varieties[183]. It is not winter hardy in Britain, though it can be pot grown outdoors in the summer and brought into a warmer place for the winter[3]. It requires a minimum winter temperature of 10°C for best fruit production but it is hardy to about -2°C[3, 196]. Trees produce about 20 kg of fruit a year, yields of 15 - 17 tonnes per hectare are achieved in New Zealand[196]. Plants are probably insensitive to day-length[196]. Very fast growing, it starts to fruit within two years from seed[200] and reaches peak production in 3 - 4 years[196]. Trees are, however, short-lived - the life of a commercial plantation is about 8 years[196]. This species does not hybridize easily with other members of the genus[196]. Plants have a shallow spreading root system and resent surface hoeing, they are best given a good mulch[196]. Plants usually ripen their fruit over a period of time, though pruning methods can be used to produce a peak time of fruiting[196]. The leaves have a pungent smell[196]. Plants are subject to attacks by red spider mites.

### Propagation

Seed - sow spring in a greenhouse. The seed usually germinates within 4 weeks at 15°C[K], within 2 weeks at 25°C[164]. When they are large enough to handle, prick the seedlings out into individual pots and grow them on in the greenhouse for at least their first winter. Plant them out into their permanent positions in late spring or early summer, after the last expected frosts. Cuttings of greenwood in a frame[200].

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### Expert comment

#### Author

(Cav.)Sendtn.

### Botanical References

200

### Links / References

[K] **Ken Fern** Notes from observations, tasting etc at Plants For A Future and on field trips.

[3] **Simmons. A. E.** Growing Unusual Fruit.

A very readable book with information on about 100 species that can be grown in Britain (some in greenhouses) and details on how to grow and use them.

[46] **Uphof. J. C. Th.** Dictionary of Economic Plants.

An excellent and very comprehensive guide but it only gives very short descriptions of the uses without any details of how to utilize the plants. Not for the casual reader.

[61] **Usher. G.** A Dictionary of Plants Used by Man.

Forget the sexist title, this is one of the best books on the subject. Lists a very extensive range of useful plants from around the world with very brief details of the uses. Not for the casual reader.

[164] **Bird. R. (Editor)** Growing from Seed. Volume 4.

Very readable magazine with lots of information on propagation. A good article on Yuccas, one on Sagebrush (*Artemisia* spp) and another on *Chaerophyllum bulbosum*.

[183] **Facciola. S.** Cornucopia - A Source Book of Edible Plants.

Excellent. Contains a very wide range of conventional and unconventional food plants (including tropical) and where they can be obtained (mainly N. American nurseries but also research institutes and a lot of other nurseries from around the world).

[196] **Popenoe. H. et al** Lost Crops of the Incas

An excellent book. Very readable, with lots of information and good pictures of some lesser known food plants of S. America.

[200] **Huxley. A.** The New RHS Dictionary of Gardening. 1992.

Excellent and very comprehensive, though it contains a number of silly mistakes. Readable yet also very detailed.

[260] **Phillips. R. & Rix. M.** Conservatory and Indoor Plants Volumes 1 & 2

Excellent photos of over 1,100 species and cultivars with habits and cultivation details plus a few plant uses. Many species are too tender for outdoors in Britain though there are many that can be grown outside.

### Readers comment

Elizabeth H.  
Mon Feb 27 2006

do they take heat? do they really taste like tomatoes?

Elizabeth H.

**tetty chaidamsari** Tue Aug 15 2006

where can I found the cyphomandra betacea tree in Indonesia

Elizabeth H.

**Muhammad Ali** Sat Sep 1 2007

sir i m n need of literature in the form of publications of tree tomato. my job is to micropropagate tree tomato.

Elizabeth H.

**steve jackson** Wed Sep 19 2007

I have recently had to visit a job i was doing east of Canterbury (in the UK close to Sturry) where on the first occasion, whilst driving I noticed something strange growing in the sparse hedgerow. purpleish young and herbaceous. I couldnt stop as the road wouldnt allow it but I had to revisit this job 3 occasions more through the growing season and everytime i looked for this plant and noticed lovely purple flowers in late spring, green fruits in summer and recently these have turned orange. The very first time i saw this plant I new it must be related to the nightshade, tomato, Solanum but none of my wild flower books had anything about it. I gave myself a little extra time and parked some 500 yards away in a farm shop and walked to collect some fruit and ultimatley seeds. I can only imagine that its quite an unusual find in Kent. I hope to use the seeds to grow next spring, well worth it as it would look great with other tropical looking plants. interesting to learn that it fruits in its second year so must of survived a mild winter allready.

Elizabeth H.

**Irma L.H. Sinaga** Fri Aug 1 2008

that's myresearch and i love it. tree tomato in Bataknesee is "tiung". It's so delicious so delicious fruit

Elizabeth H.

**Gaian** Sun Aug 31 2008

I started a Cyphomandra Betaceae from seed in March indoors in a pot. By June (3 months later) it was covered in flowers which I 'tickled' to pollinate. Fruits are still forming (August), and there are loads of them (at least 100) on a plant that is about 3ft high, very leggy and in a fairly small pot. I popped it outside hoping for a decent summer (UK 2008) and it got badly bent by the high winds this year, but even the shoots that got bent double are still developing the fruits nicely. Whether we ever get enough of a summer to actually ripen them is another matter!

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