

# *Annona squamosa*

**FAMILY** : Annonaceae

**LATIN NAME** : *Annona squamosa* L.

**SYNONYM(S)** :

**ENGLISH** : Custard Apple, Sweet sop, Sugar Apple, Sweet Apre

**FRENCH** : Corossolier écailleux, Pommier Cannelle

## DESCRIPTION.



Particularities for easier identification: **The unusual globose fruits of this species with many rounded protuberances giving a distinctly segmented appearance and the distichous arrangement of the leaves serve to aid with easy identification.**

Habit: A small tree/shrub, 3-6m in height with a diameter to 20cm.

Bark & Branches: The bark is smooth with very shallow longitudinal fissures, visible leaf scars and is coloured grey; twigs are light brown/grey and lenticellate.

Leaves: are simple, alternate (distichous arrangement), thin and dull green, oblong elliptic to narrowly elliptic (7-17x3-6cm) and petiolate with prominent main and side veins on the abaxial surface.

Inflorescences: arise as few flowered clusters.

Flowers: consist of 3 sepals (1mm); 3 oblong thick petals up to 3cm long which are channelled inside, green/white in colour and purple at the base; and 3 inner reduced (sometimes absent) petals.

Fruits: are globose to heart-shaped, 5-10cm in diameter, with many rounded protuberances (tuberculate) so that the outside of the fruit appears segmented. They are greenish yellow when ripe, edible, with a sweet aromatic yellow-white pulp. The numerous seeds are dark brown to black, shiny and smooth in texture.

Note: this species can be differentiated from *Annona senegalensis* by its narrower/thinner leaves and the larger size of its fruit.

Flowers April to September; fruits May to September.

## DISTRIBUTION.

This species is an exotic to The Sahel and originates from the West Indies and South America. It is mainly grown in gardens for its fruit and ornamental value.

### **PREFERRED USES.**

Amenity                  Fruit                          Insecticide                  Medicine                  Oil

The fruit is edible and is regularly found in local markets. It can be made into a delicious ice cream and in the West Indies is fermented into a type of Cider. This tree is often grown for its ornamental value, as it is attractive and slightly unusual with its rather odd fruits. The seeds are reported to contain yellow non-drying (highly toxic?) oil that is aromatic and is also used to treat lice. All parts of the tree can be used as an insecticide (green fruits, seeds, leaves). This species is also reported to host the shellac insect.

Reported human medicinal uses for this species are as follows. The leaves, bark, and roots of this species are reported to contain Hydrogen Cyanide so any treatment should be administered with great prudence. Bearing this in mind ....The roots are used as a drastic purge. The leaves are used as a vermicide, for treating cancerous tumours and are applied to abscesses, insect bites and other skin complaints. Scrapings of root-bark are used for toothache. Powdered seeds are used to kill head-lice and fleas but care should be taken that the powder does not come in contact with the eyes as this causes great pain.

### **TREE REQUIREMENTS.**

**Rainfall** : 700+mm, but often grown on less rainfall, with additional watering.

**Soil Type** : Tolerates a wide variety of soils.

**Altitude** : 0-2,000+M.

**Temperature** : Tolerates fairly high temperatures. Not tolerant to frost.

**Propagation** : 2,500-3,000Seeds/kg; they stay viable for about a year. It is an easy species to propagate. The seeds can be planted with no pre-treatment. Seedlings are ready for planting out after 6 months. Alternatively direct sowing can be practised; plant about three seeds, water and thin to one plant.

**After Care** : Protection against browsing animals is required. If it is well protected then this species will start producing fruit within about 2 years.

### **OTHER POINTS.**

This is a fairly easy and attractive tree/shrub to grow. However, regular watering and manure application is required if good fruit production is to be expected.

### **References**

Baumer 1995, Burkill (vol 1 1985), GTZ/ICRAF 1990, Vogt 1995 + [Hamza (1990),].

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