

Annona reticulata

[Synonyms : *Annona excelsa*, *Annona humboldtiana*, *Annona humboldtii*, *Annona laevis*, *Annona longifolia*, *Annona riparia*]

CUSTARD APPLE is a deciduous shrub or tree. Native to tropical and sub-tropical America (particularly the Caribbean) it has strongly scented flowers that are light green outside, yellowish-white to yellowish-green with purple-blotched base inside.

It is also known as *Annone* (German), *Annone réticulée* (French), *Anoda* (Sinhalese), *Anon* (Spanish), *Anona* (Spanish), *Anona colorada* (Guatemalan, Spanish), *Anona corazón* (Spanish), *Anona de Cuba* (Spanish), *Anona de redecilla* (Honduran, Nicaraguan, Spanish), *Anona de seso* (Guatemalan, Spanish), *Anona pelon* (Spanish), *Anona roja* (Guatemalan, Spanish), *Anona rosada* (El Salvador, Spanish), *Anonas* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Anoneira* (Portuguese), *Anonillo* (Spanish), *Anón injerto* (Spanish), *Anón manteca* (Cuban, Dominican Republic, Spanish), *Anón pelon* (Colombian, Spanish), *Anti* (Nepalese), *Araticum apé* (Portuguese), *Araticum do mato* (Portuguese), *Binh bat* (Vietnamese), *Buah nona* (Malay), *Bullock's heart*, *Bull's heart*, *Cachiman* (French), *Cachiman coeur de boeuf* (Antilles, French), *Cherimoya*, *Chirimoya roia* (Bolivian, Spanish), *Coeur de boeuf* (French), *Common custard apple*, *Coracao de boi* (Portuguese), *Corazón* (Spanish), *Corazón de buey* (Spanish), *Corossol réticulée* (French), *Corossol sauvage* (French), *Graviola* (Portuguese), *Gyuushinri* (Japanese), *Jamaica apple*, *Kashiman* (Creole), *Kasjoema* (Dutch), *Khan tua lot* (Laothian), *Lonang* (Malay), *Luvuni* (Hindi), *Mamán* (Spanish), *Mamon* (Cuban, Dominican Republic, Spanish), *Manzana de ilán* (Spanish), *Mean bat* (Khmer), *Milolo* (Portuguese), *Mo bat* (Cambodian, Khmer), *Netted custard apple*, *Netzannone* (German), *Niu xin fan li zhi* (Chinese), *Niu xin guo* (Chinese), *Niu xin li* (Chinese), *Noi-nang* (Thai), *Noi nong* (Thai), *Nona* (Hindi), *Nona kapri* (Malay), *Ochsenherz* (German), *Ochsenherzapfel* (German), *Qua na* (Vietnamese), *Raamaphal* (Nepalese), *Ramfal* (Gujarati), *Ramsita* (Tamil), *Saramuyo* (Mexican, Spanish), *Sarikaya* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Soursop*, *Srii raamaphal* (Nepalese), *Sugar apple*, and *Sweet sop*.

The leaves have an unpleasant smell, the flowers never open fully, and the yellow and reddish-green or reddish-brown fruit can weigh more than 2 lb. and contain in total 55-76 seeds.

Warning – the seeds are considered poisonous by some authorities and the bark exudes an irritant juice that can inflame eyes.

Reticulata is Latin (net-like) meaning 'net-veined, netted or marked with a net-like pattern'.

The North American Seminole Indians picked the plant for food. They also treated some kidney disorders with a flower infusion.

Records suggest that in its native land in the American tropics the ripe fruit were usually eaten by the Negro slaves and some of the Creoles. Yet Spanish colonists preferred to enjoy the unripe fruit as a sweetmeat after slices of it had been sun-dried and coated with sugar and cinnamon (*Cinnamomum verum*). Today the fruit are eaten raw (usually with sugar) or used to make milk shakes, sweet sauces and ice cream – although some authorities believe it is inferior to cherimoya (*Annona cherimola*).

The leaves and branches yield both a black and a blue dye – and the leaves have also been used in tanning.

The bark has been a source of fibre (which has been used for making string and twine) and the durable, yellow wood has been used to make yokes for oxen.

It was introduced to Africa by Portuguese traders three or four hundred years ago (and has become naturalised in many places there) and from there it has gone on to other parts of the Old World tropics. Both the leaves and a seed solution have been used in some parts of Africa as an insecticide. (Today in South Africa it is a common sight in private gardens.) In India, particularly in villages around Calcutta, the fresh fruit are eaten locally. No doubt the tree has grown for some time in Sri Lanka as it has attracted some negative superstition there. Some Sri Lankans believe that the fruit promote leprosy. Records show that any fruit which fall into swamps will be eaten immediately by fish and turtles.

In 1997 the \$2 postage stamp on the island of Anguilla (one of the Leeward Islands in the Caribbean) portrayed the custard apple.

Medicinally, the pulped bark (or the leaves) has been used in poultices applied to sprains, boils and ulcers – and in West Africa the unripe fruit (dried and pulverised) or a bark decoction have been used to ease dysentery and diarrhoea and a decoction of the leaves or root has been prescribed as a remedy for worms. The root has provided a local treatment for epilepsy.