

# Jaboticaba

*Plinia cauliflora*, the **Brazilian grapetree**,<sup>[2]</sup> or **jaboticaba**,<sup>[2]</sup> is a tree in the family *Myrtaceae*, native to Minas Gerais and São Paulo states in Brazil.<sup>[2]</sup> Related species in the genus *Myrciaria*, often referred to by the same common names, are native to Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Peru and Bolivia. The tree is grown for its purplish-black, white-pulped fruits; they can be eaten raw or be used to make jellies and drinks (plain juice or wine).

## 1 Description

### 1.1 Tree



*Jaboticaba tree*

The tree is a slow-growing evergreen that can reach a height of 15 meters if not pruned. It has salmon-colored leaves when they are young, which turn green as they mature. The tree prefers moist, rich, lightly acidic soil. It is widely adaptable, however, and grows satisfactorily even on alkaline beach-sand type soils, so long as they are tended and irrigated. Its flowers are white and grow directly from its trunk in a cauliflorous habit. In an uncultivated state, the tree may flower and fruit only once



*Jaboticaba tree*

or twice a year, but when continuously irrigated it flowers frequently, and fresh fruit can be available year round in tropical regions.

### 1.2 Fruit

The fruit is a thick-skinned berry and typically measures 3–4 cm in diameter. The fruit resembles that of a slip-skin grape. It has a thick, purple, astringent skin that encases a sweet, white or rosy pink gelatinous flesh. Embedded within the flesh are one to four large seeds, which vary in shape depending on the species.<sup>[3]</sup> Common in Brazilian markets, jaboticabas are largely eaten fresh; their popularity has been likened to that of grapes in the United States. Fresh fruit may begin to ferment 3 to 4 days after harvest, so they are often used to make jams, tarts, strong wines, and liqueurs. Due to the extremely short shelf-life, fresh jaboticaba fruit is very rare in markets outside of areas of cultivation. Traditionally, an astringent decoction

of the sun-dried skins has been used as a treatment for hemoptysis, asthma, diarrhoea, and gargled for chronic inflammation of the tonsils.



Leaves of *Plinia cauliflora*

Several potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory anticancer compounds have been isolated from the fruit.<sup>[4]</sup> One that is unique to the fruit is jaboticabin.

In Brazil the fruit of several related species, namely *Myrciaria tenella* and *M. trunciflora*, share the same common name. While all jaboticaba species are subtropical and can tolerate mild, brief frosts, some species may be marginally more cold-tolerant. Commercial cultivation of the fruit in the Northern Hemisphere is more restricted by extremely slow growth and the short shelf-life of fruit than by temperature requirements. Grafted plants may bear fruit in 5 years; seed grown trees may take 10 to 20 years to bear fruit, though their slow growth and small size when immature make them popular as bonsai or container ornamental plants in temperate regions. Jaboticabas are fairly adaptable to various kinds of growing conditions, tolerating sand or rich topsoil. They are intolerant of salty soils or salt spray. They are tolerant of mild drought, though fruit production may be reduced, and irrigation will be required in extended or severe droughts.

## 2 Cultural aspects

The name jaboticaba, derived from the Tupi word *Jabuti* (tortoise) + *Caba* (place), meaning the place where you find tortoises. The Guarani name is “Yvapurū”, where *yva* means fruit, and the onomatopoeic word *purū* for the crunching sound the fruit produces when bitten.

A traditional song from the eastern region of Bolivia refers to a young woman as having “eyes like the guapuru” (because of their soft blackness) and a mouth “as sweet as the achachairu.”<sup>[5]</sup>

The jaboticaba tree, which appears as a charge on the coat of arms of Contagem, Minas Gerais, Brazil,<sup>[6]</sup> has become a widely used species in the art of bonsai, particularly in Taiwan and parts of the Caribbean.

In Brazil, it is common to refer to something allegedly unique to the country as a “jaboticaba” since the tree supposedly only grows in Brazil. It is usually a pejorative expression.<sup>[7][8]</sup>

## 3 References

- [1] *The Plant List: A Working List of All Plant Species*, retrieved 23 April 2016
- [2] “Taxon: *Plinia cauliflora* (Mart.) Kausel”. *Germplasm Resources Information Network*. United States Department of Agriculture. Retrieved 2016-04-23.
- [3] Boning, Charles (2006). *Florida's Best Fruiting Plants: Native and Exotic Trees, Shrubs and Vines*. Sarasota, Florida: Pineapple Press, Inc. p. 104.
- [4] Reynertson KA, Wallace AM, Adachi S, Gil RR, Yang H, Basile MJ, D'Armiento J, Weinstein IB, Kennelly EJ. Bioactive depsides and anthocyanins from jaboticaba (*Myrciaria cauliflora*). *J Nat Prod*. 2006 Aug;69(8):1228-30 PMID 16933884 doi:10.1021/np0600999.
- [5]
- [6] Brazilian Flags
- [7] “Gente que rega: Lula no país das jaboticabas”. Folha de S.Paulo. 2003-09-07. *A jaboticabeira e o seu fruto têm presença constante no conjunto de metáforas que assola o país. O que geralmente está em discussão quando alguém menciona o fruto negro da árvore da família Myrtaceae são as peculiaridades brasileiras. “Se só existe no Brasil e não é jaboticaba, desconfie”, reza o ditado. Translation: The jaboticaba tree and its fruit has a constant presence in the set of metaphors which ravages the country. What is generally in debate when someone mentions the Myrtaceae family tree's black fruit are Brazilian peculiarities. 'If it just exists in Brazil and is not jaboticaba, beware!', so goes the saying.*
- [8] “A jaboticaba e os vira-latas nacionais”. Valor Econômico. 2012-10-22. *“Existe só no Brasil e não é jaboticaba? Não presta”. Poucos ditados concentram tão bem, em mensagem tão convincente, uma ideia tão equivocada. Translation: “Does it exist only in Brazil and is it not a jaboticaba? It is no good.” Too few sayings sum up so well, in as convicent a message, such a wrong idea.*

## 4 External links

- Jaboticaba California Rare Fruit Growers.
- Jaboticaba Features and growing conditions.

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