

Myrciaria cauliflora 2

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Myrciaria cauliflora





MYRCIARIA cauliflora (Jaboticaba) is both attractive as a garden ornamental and productive, bearing an abundance of delicious fruit during November. This evergreen tree is a native of Brazil, but has been grown in local gardens for quite some time now. It was already being advertised in a local nursery catalogue back in 1974, but is still not readily available, although some specimens are maturing to a point where they are being recognised as a most worthwhile garden subject.

The Jaboticaba tree is usually slow growing and has a compact and bushy growth habit. It attains a mature height of three to four metres (although very old specimens have been known to reach 10 metres in height). The leaves are pale to bright green with a glossy lustre, with new spring growth an attractive coppery-bronze shade. The trees are propagated quite easily from seed and take approximately seven or eight years to reach maturity and start producing flowers and fruit. The tiny green or cream flowers appear in early spring on all the main branches and stems, often hidden by the lush outer foliage. These develop into round, grape-like fruit that turn purple-black when ripe. They are normally about 15 mm in diameter, but can grow to 25 mm in diameter in ideal conditions. The skin of the fruit is waxy and tough, but the pulp is delicious and juicy and not unlike the flesh of a litchi. Each fruit contains a single fleshy seed. In warm, sub-tropical climates further crops of fruit are sometimes produced sporadically throughout the year.

Tasty fruit

The fruits should be harvested as soon as they turn black. They are extremely tasty eaten fresh and can also be used for making jam and producing homemade wine. If not eaten immediately they should be stored in the refrigerator. Birds and monkeys also relish the fruit and often strip trees of fruit before humans actually realise that the tree has borne fruit. If you are privileged to have a Jaboticaba tree in your garden, examine it regularly for fruit from the last week of October each year.

Growing requirements

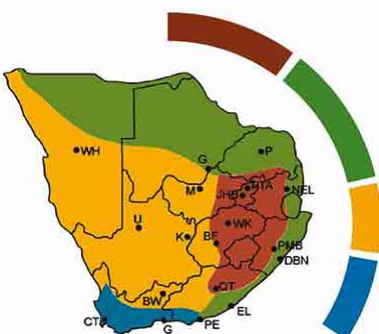
Plant *M. cauliflora* in rich, loamy soil in an open, sunny position in the garden, where there is sufficient space for it to grow and develop into a stand alone specimen tree. Feed or fertilise it during spring, summer and autumn with a general purpose garden fertiliser that is high in potassium. This will enhance fruit formation and improve the quality and flavour.

As mentioned previously, Jaboticaba specimens are not readily available in the local garden and nursery trade at this stage, but they are sure to become more and more accessible as their unique properties and virtues are recognised by plant growers and gardeners alike. Be on the lookout for plants on your travels around the country – you may just be fortunate enough to find one or two.

Winter rainfall regions:

Will grow in protected positions away from strong winds.

Requires watering during the hot, dry summer season.



Dry, arid regions:

Young plants will require protection in winter.

Regular watering during extended dry periods is essential.

Sub-tropical, summer rainfall regions:

Thrives in this climatic zone, often producing more than one crop of fruit each year.

Temperate, summer rainfall or Highveld regions:

Withstands light to moderate winter frost. Protect young plants during winter. Avoid planting in the path of icy winds.