

# Melicoccus bijugatus

*Melicoccus bijugatus*, commonly called **Spanish lime**, **genip**, **guinep**, **genipe**, **ginepa**, **quenepa**, **chenet**, **canepa**, **mamon**, **limoncillo** or **mamoncillo**,<sup>[1]</sup> is a fruit-bearing tree in the soapberry family Sapindaceae, native or naturalized over a wide area of the tropics including South and Central America, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Haiti and other parts of the Caribbean.

Aruba), *knippa* (in Suriname) and *Spanish lime* (in the United States), and *limoncillo* (in the Dominican Republic). Also, it is often referred to as *anoncillo* in central Cuba and southern Florida. It is called “ackee” in the countries of Barbados, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, however, in the rest of the Caribbean, the latter name is used to refer to the related *Blighia sapida*.

## 1 Taxonomy

The genus *Melicoccus* was first described by Patrick Browne, an Irish doctor and botanist, in 1756. This description was based on *M. bijugatus* trees which were cultivated in Puerto Rico. In 1760, Nikolaus Joseph von Jacquin described the first species in Browne’s genus, which he named *M. bijugatus*. In 1762 Linnaeus used a spelling variation of the name *Melicocca bijuga*. Over the next two centuries, Linnaeus’ spelling variation was used in almost all publications. A proposal was made in 1994 to conserve *Melicocca* over *Melicoccus*, but the proposal was rejected, leading to a restoration of the original version of the name.<sup>[2]</sup>

In 1888 German taxonomist Ludwig Radlkofer placed *Melicoccus* in the tribe Melicocceae together with eight other genera. In his monograph on the Neotropical members of the tribe (*Talisia* and *Melicoccus*) Pedro Acevedo-Rodríguez suggested that although *Talisia* and *Melicoccus* appeared to form a monophyletic group, the other (Old World) genera probably did not belong to the same lineage.<sup>[2]</sup>

The specific epithet *bijugatus* refers to the bijugate leaves,<sup>[2]</sup> leaves which consist of two pairs of leaflets.

### 1.1 Local names

It is known by many names around the growth region: *mamoncillo* or *mamón* (in Cuba, Costa Rica, Colombia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, and Venezuela), *chenette* (in Trinidad and Tobago), *gnep* or *guinep* (in Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, the United States Virgin Islands and Antigua and Barbuda), *guaya*, *quenepa* (in México and Puerto Rico), *skinnip* (in St. Kitts, “skinup” in (Grenada), *kenip* (in Dominica), *canepa*, *genip*, *guinep*, *ginepa*, *ginnip*, *kenèp* (in Guyana, Haiti, Belize, Bahamas, Anguilla, Sint Maarten, Sint Eustatius, Saba) and in some parts of Central America *talpa jocote* (in some parts of Guatemala), *genepa*, *xenepa*, *kenepa* (in Curaçao and

## 2 Distribution

*Melicoccus bijugatus* is native to northern South America and naturalised in coastal and dry forest in Central America, the Caribbean and parts of the Old World tropics.<sup>[2]</sup> It is believed to have been introduced into the Caribbean in pre-Columbian times.<sup>[3]</sup> This fruit, known as *quenepa* in Puerto Rico, grows particularly abundant in the municipality of Ponce, and there is a yearly celebration in that municipality known as Festival Nacional de la Quenepa (National Genip Fruit Festival).<sup>[4]</sup>

## 3 Description

Trees can reach heights of up to 25 m and come with alternate, compound leaves. The leaves have 4 elliptic leaflets which are 5-12.5 cm long and 2.5–5 cm (1-2 in.) wide. They are typically dioecious plants however polygamous trees occur from time to time. Flowers have 4 petals and 8 stamens and produce void, green drupes which are 2.5–4 cm long and 2 cm wide. Their pulp is orange, salmon or yellowish in color with a somewhat juicy and pasty texture.

This fruit can be sweet or sour. In the southern areas of Mexico, it is generally eaten with chili powder, salt, and lime. The sweet varieties are generally eaten without condiments of any kind.

## 4 Cultivation

Being tropical, *M. bijugatus* prefers warmer temperatures. Its leaves can be damaged if the temperature hits the freezing point, with serious damage occurring below −4°C.

It is grown and cultivated for its ovoid, green fruit, which grow in bunches.<sup>[2]</sup> The fruit, somewhat like a cross between a lychee and a lime, has a tight and thin, but rigid

layer of skin, traditionally opened by biting into with the teeth. Inside the skin is the tart, tangy, creamy pulp (technically the seed coat, or aril), which is sucked by putting the whole fruit inside the mouth (hence the name *mamoncillo* as *mamar* means “to suck”) because the seed takes most of the volume of what is inside the skin. Despite the light color of the fruit’s flesh, the juice stains a dark brown color, and was often used by indigenous Arawak natives to dye cloth.

The species is also commonly planted along roadsides as an ornamental tree.<sup>[2]</sup>

## 5 See also

- Korlan
- Longan
- Lychee
- Rambutan

## 6 References

- [1] Bailey, L.H.; Bailey, E.Z.; the staff of the Liberty Hyde Bailey Hortorium. 1976. *Hortus third: A concise dictionary of plants cultivated in the United States and Canada*. Macmillan, New York.
- [2] Acevedo-Rodríguez, Pedro (2003). “Melicocceae (Sapindaceae): *Melicoccus* and *Talisia*”. *Flora Neotropica* **87**: 1–178. JSTOR 4393917.
- [3] Francis, John K. *Melicoccus bijugatus* Jacq. *Quenepa*. *Sapindaceae*. *Soapberry family*. . USDA Forest Service, Southern Forest Experiment Station, Institute of Tropical Forestry SO-ITF-SM; 48.
- [4] *Celebra Ponce a su mimada quenepa*. Ana María Rolón Romero. La Perla del Sur. Ponce, Puerto Rico. Year 26, Issue 1535. Page 26. 12 August 2009. Retrieved 6 October 2013.

## 7 External links

- Fruits of Warm Climates: Mamoncillo
- *Melicoccus bijugatus* (Sapindaceae)
- Grown in Dominican Republic: Limoncillo
- Cayman Islands - guinep

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