

Syzygium jambos Rose Apple

The flower of *Syzygium jambos* is typical of the family Myrtaceae. Like Eucalypts, it displays a profusion of stamens and produces nectar to attract pollinators. Beside the flower, a fruit is developing.

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Syzygium jambos is a native of southeast Asia, well known in India (which in Sanskrit was called Jambudvita, ie. Rose Apple Land). This plant is known in the West Indies as Malabar Plum, Yambo in the Philippines, Appelroos in Surinam and Jambeiro in Brazil. It is regarded as weed in parts of Queensland.

The fruit varies in colour and has soft crisp flesh which has a rose scent. It is valued for making sweets and jelly and is regularly found in fruit markets in SE Asia. The fruit does not keep well.

Rose Apple makes a good shade tree which can reach up to 25 metres in normal growing conditions.

Supposedly Buddha sat under it waiting for enlightenment, but this is now considered to be incorrect. His major shrine is under a fig tree, in the province of Gujarat in India.

The plant is tolerant of poor soil but needs good rainfall.

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Top: Developing fruit of *Syzygium jambos* after the stamens have been discarded. The style, through which the ovules were pollinated, remains attached for some time.

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Bottom: Leaves and developing fruit, GBG.

The bark has been used in tanning. Oil can be distilled from the leaves, for the perfume industry. Its flowers are excellent for bees.

Other than the fruit, most parts of this plant are poisonous. As with many plants in the East, this has resulted in it being used for a variety of medical problems. In India it is used as a diuretic. Having been introduced throughout tropical and sub-tropical areas of the world, it has a variety of uses outside Asia. For example, in Colombia it is used as an anaesthetic, in Cuba the root seems to help epilepsy patients and in Nicaragua it is considered good for diabetics.

Family: Myrtaceae

Species: *Syzygium jambos*

Common name: Rose Apple



Top: Map of part of Geelong Botanic Gardens (GBG), showing locations of *Syzygium jambos* plants.

Bottom: *Syzygium jambos* fruiting branch with leaves and numbered sections of fruit and seed. Chromolithograph by P. Depannemaeker, c.1885, after B. Hoola van Nooten. Wellcome Collection gallery: wellcomecollection.org CC-BY-4.0