

Tropical South America

Common names: **English:** Sugar apple, sweetsop.

Ecology: Now very widely distributed through the tropics and particularly well known in Africa, Australia and South East Asia. It performs well up to 1,200 m with high rainfall (over 1,000 mm), and is tolerant of a wide range of soils provided drainage is good. Slightly acid soils (pH 5.5-6.5) are best. Rather rare in Uganda, but grows well near Lake Victoria.

Uses: Firewood, fruit, shade, ornamental, windbreak.

Description: A small tree to 7 m, the bole less than 1 m high and up to 20 cm in diameter. Branches spread widely and typically their tips bend over or touch the ground. The crown is open. **BARK:** grey with an **interlaced pattern of shallow fissures**. **LEAVES:** simple, alternate, dull green, **long oval in shape 7-17 cm**, a few hairs below, often held at one level. The tree may keep its leaves or shed them for a brief period each year. **FLOWERS:** individual flowers are produced **singly, or in pairs**, beside leaves or on the other side of the shoot from a leaf. They **hang down**, yellow-green and **about 2 cm across when open, parts in threes**. **FRUIT:** **compound, heart-shaped, 8-10 cm across, surface green-yellow with a powdery bloom, having the appearance of scales**. When ripe it has a white pulp containing black seeds within each section. The flesh is aromatic with a sugary sweet taste, surrounding shiny brown-black seeds.

Propagation: Seedlings (sow seeds in pots).

Seed: Extracted by hand or after maceration from ripe fruits collected off and below existing trees. Germination takes 2-4 weeks, **treatment:** not necessary.

storage: if stored in cool dry conditions the seed can retain viability for 6-12 months.

Management: Plant the trees 5-6 m apart; when combined with mango 10-12 m. Weeding is necessary. Slow growing.

Remarks: Has been interplanted in coffee and banana plantations. A fruit tree worth growing more in Uganda.

