

Mango

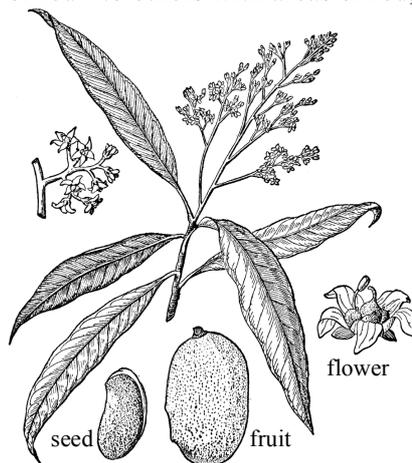
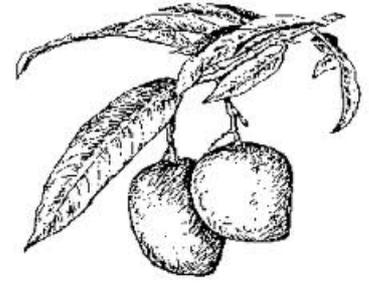
It looks like we will have a good mango season this year. I love this juicy chin-dripping fruit. Difficult to peel and messy to eat, but the effort is well worth it, don't you agree? Mango lovers suggest eating the fruits in the shower!

The earliest mention of mango is in the Hindu scripture dating back to 4000 BCE. Cultivation and domestication probably began in 2000 BCE. In the early stages, the tiny and fibrous fruit had unpleasant turpentine taste; there was little resemblance to the richly flavoured succulent fruit that we have come to enjoy so much today.

Mango is native to India. It is said a Chinese traveller who visited India in the 1st century first made mango known to the outside world. Not long after, cultivation spread to East and Southeast Asia. Later, Persian traders took mangos to the Middle East and East Africa. With the arrival of the Portuguese in India, cultivation was spread to South America and West Africa. It reached Brazil and the West Indies, then Hawaii and Mexico. Mango is now considered one of (if not) the finest and most popular tropical fruits; mango tree is cultivated as a fruit tree in frost-free tropical regions throughout the world. The name 'mango' comes from the Tamil word 'man-kay' or 'man-gay', which evolved into 'manga', then 'mango'.

Mango trees are handsome evergreen large trees; the leaves are pink when young, changing to a glossy red, then green as they mature. The tiny flowers are white and pinkish. The fruits hang from the tree in clusters on long stems attached to the main branches. Mangos must have warm and dry weather to ensure good fruit set, they require a tropical climate with a defined hot and dry period, where there are monsoon seasons followed by dry seasons. The quality of the fruit is based on the scarcity of fibre and minimal turpentine taste.

With successful cultivation, today there are over 1000 different varieties of mangos. The fruits vary in size (the smallest being no larger than an egg) from 5cm to 25cm in length and from 100g to 1kg in weight. The colour of the skin varies considerably - from all yellow, red on one side, green on the other, all green with a touch of yellow or red - to others with areas of red, green and yellow. Shapes also vary from round, elongated to oval.



Mangos came to Australia in the latter half of the 19th century when Bowen in north Queensland was the centre of a thriving trading business between north Queensland and India. The Bowen harbour master at the time planted mango seeds on his property just outside Bowen, when this initial stock came into fruits; seeds from the better producing trees were selected and planted at Adelaide point, near Bowen. A local farmer selected again the better fruits from the harvests and started a small mango orchard on his property 'Kensington' in the late 1880s. Within a few years, better and better mangos were cultivated but the name 'Kensington' still remains and this variety is sometimes called 'Bowen special'. It has bright orange colour, often with a red blush, and its deep orange flesh is luscious and free of fibrous strands.

Mango - Culture, Myths and Legends: The mango appears in many oriental myths and legends. An Indian legend relates how Surya Bai, daughter of the sun, wife of the king, transformed herself into a lotus to escape the persecutions of an evil sorceress. When the king fell in love with this lotus, the sorceress was furious and burnt it to ashes. However, from the ashes sprang a mango tree, which enchanted the king. When a ripe fruit fell to the ground, Surya Bai stepped out from it and the king was reunited with his long lost beloved wife. The familiar old practice of regular burning the roots of mango trees or spreading ash on the roots to ensure a good crop may have given credence to this legend?

To millions of people living in India and Southeast Asia, mangos have an important role in culture and religion. The tree has been there from time immemorial, and the fruit has been a staple and precious food for as long as anyone can remember. Legend has it that Buddha found tranquility and repose in a mango grove. The endearing expression referring to one's loved ones as 'the apple in the eye' in the English language has its equivalent as 'the sweet juicy mango' in eastern languages. India considers mango its national fruit, and a divine one at that. The people use mangos in magic and rituals, in riddles and proverbs, in medicine, in festivals and in many other celebrations.

Throughout Asia, down through the centuries, every part of the mango has been considered beneficial and has been used in folk medicine in some form or another. Bark, leaves, skin, pith, all have been concocted into various types of treatments or preventatives. In the home kitchen, both ripe and green mangos are greatly valued. The ripe mango, according to many, is unrivalled in flavour, taste and fragrance. The green fruit makes lovely pickles and chutneys; it can also be sliced fresh and served dipped in spicy sauces, or in a mixture of sugar or salt and chillies. Salads of shredded unripe mangoes are delicious and refreshing. The mango certainly lives up to names bestowed upon it such as 'king of all fruits' and 'fruit of the Gods'.