



# Indian Gooseberry

*Phyllanthus emblica*



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# Introduction

- Family: Phyllanthaceae
- Genus: *Phyllanthus*
- Species: *emblica*
- Also known as: emblic, myrobalan, Malacca tree, or amla

# Geography

- Originally from Northern India
- Found in the tropics, mostly in the south temperate zone with some reaching the middle of the north temperate zone.
- Grown primarily in Indian and parts of the Middle East and Asia.

# Morphology

- The tree is small to medium in size, 8-18m
- It has a crooked trunk and spreading branches
- The branchlets are glabrous or finely pubescent, 10–20 cm long, usually deciduous
- The leaves are simple, subsessile and closely set along branchlets, and light green
- The flowers are greenish-yellow
- The fruit is nearly spherical, light greenish yellow, quite smooth and hard on appearance, with six vertical stripes or furrows

# Features of Cultivation

- 1-1.25 m pits are dug 2 months prior to planting and are filled with manure with neem cake or bone meal.
- Requires ample humidity for initiation of fruit growth during July-August when budding plants are planted in the prepared pits.
- Can be grown in a variety of soils.
- Arid and semiarid conditions are ideal.
- Fruit is usually harvested autumn but some areas don't harvest until early February.

# Plant Use

- It is used mainly in India and is a centerpiece of Ayurvedic medicine.
- Also used in Siddha, Unani, Tibetan, Sri Lankan, and Chinese medicine.
- It is one of the rare super berries with potent antioxidant abilities providing unique healing properties.
- Medicinal uses:
  - High cholesterol
  - Diabetes
  - Inflammation
  - Diarrhea
  - Obesity
  - Cancer

# Plant Use cont.

- Fruit can be eaten raw or cooked into various dishes.
- Commonly pickled with salt, oil, and spices.
- Oil used on skin and in shampoos - thought to prevent grey hair.
- The powder can be used for tea and natural hair wash.

# Historical Facts

- Amla is the most revered medicinal berry in India.
- Amla is said to come from the first tree to appear on earth, manifested out of the tears of Brahma while he was meditating.
- The tree is sacred to Hindus and worshiped by some groups that believe Vishnu is inside it.
- Called sarvadosha hara, remover of all diseases.



# North American Use

- While many species of gooseberries are found in North America, Indian gooseberry is not widely used outside of Indian and some Asian cultures.

# Interesting Facts

- Chyavanprash is an ages old Ayurvedic preparation made from amla fruits. In India it is prescribed as a restorative tonic which also develops resistance in the body against various diseases.
- The legend is that this preparation was specially formulated by the Ashwinikumars, the physicians to gods in heaven, for a sage called Chyavan who had grown very frail and old after years of penance. After taking the tonic, the sage started looking so young and youthful that even his wife failed to recognize him when he went home after being away for years.

# References

- <http://www.clinicaleducation.org/resources/reviews/amla-an-ancient-super-berry-emerges-from-india/>
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