

## Syzygium and Eugenia species

*Eugenia uniflora*, commonly known as the Surinam cherry is a bush or is a small tree to about 8m in height, indigenous to the Amazon rainforest. It has deep green pointed ovate-lanceolate leaves that turn red in the cold winter weather. It has small white to lilac flowers followed by attractive edible fruit. It makes an excellent bonsai subject, an interesting and attractive feature (indoors or out) or clippable hedge and is widely cultivated for its fruit.

Amongst its other attributes it is a valuable "bush food" and medicinal plant. The leaves have an essential oil containing citronella, cineole, terpenine, and sesquiterpenes amongst others. In Suriname's traditional medicine, a decoction of the leaves is used as a cold remedy and in Haiti to soothe a sore throat.

The fruits are round, red to dark red, deeply longitudinal grooved berries that are very juicy and flavoursome with a high vitamin C content and elements of calcium, phosphorus, iron, vitamin A, riboflavinine and niacine. They make excellent eating either raw or as a jam or pie fruit. Fruits develop and ripen in just 3 weeks from flowering. In Brazil, the juice is fermented into wine or vinegar.

This *Eugenia* is adapted subtropical and tropical climates, and also more temperate climates if given protection while young. It is hardy to at least -2°C when full grown. Mature plants do not suffer much damage from slightly lower temperatures, and they revive in full sun. Serious damage to mature plants occurs at -5°C. As with many tropicals it can be grown successfully in pots indoors and this is a useful and practical way of establishing this species in cooler climates. Indoors, misting of the plants is helpful in winter. Outdoors plants like full sun to part shade and are drought tolerant, needing only moderate rainfall. It prefers a fertile loam but grows in almost any type of soil. Fruits develop and ripen in just 3 weeks from flowering.

Surinam cherry is a member of the *Eugenia* family and like its cousins the Lilly Pillies are easily propagated from fresh seed, although seed only has a viable life of about 4 to 6 weeks, so if you are interested in this one don't leave it too long.

Seed will germinate readily without any pretreatment other than soaking overnight.

Propagate in a loamy media, basically any good garden soil or quality seed raising mix. The media should be kept moist and not allowed to dry out. Placing the pot or tray in a shallow water bath is useful. Propagation in damp sphagnum moss kept moist and in a warm position is also successful.

Prick individual seedlings into tubes as soon as they are large enough to handle and grow on to a minimum of 25cm or as desired or determined by climatic conditions.

Plant out in any good quality soil with plenty of nutrient after the danger of frost has passed.

Water in well and water regularly and as needed. This species likes its moisture.

Protect small seedlings from slugs and snails. Protect seedlings and small trees from browsing livestock.



BETULA FRAXINOSA

