

Myrciaria cauliflora - Jaboticaba

Myrciaria cauliflora, commonly known as Jaboticaba is a slow growing large shrub or small, bushy tree that is found naturally in the Minas Gerais region of Brazil. It reaches a height of 3 to 5m in cultivation. The trees are profusely branched, beginning close to the ground and slanting upward and outward so that the dense, rounded crown may attain an ultimate spread as wide as it is tall.

The thin, beige to reddish bark flakes off much like that of the guava.

The evergreen, opposite leaves are lanceolate to elliptic, some 2 to 3 cm in length on this small leaved form, and half that in width, in a glossy dark green with a leathery texture.

The small yellow-white flowers dramatically emerge from the multiple trunks, limbs and large branches in groups of four.

Jaboticaba fruit is grape-like in appearance and texture but with a thicker, tougher skin. Fruit is dark purple to almost black in colour, ranging in size from 2 to 4cm. The gelatinous whitish pulp contains from one to four small seeds and has a pleasant, subacid flavor markedly similar to certain muscadine grapes. The skin has a slight resinous flavour and fruit may be produced singly or in clusters from the ground up all over the trunk and main branches, and the plant may fruit up to five times per year. Fresh fruit is delicious eaten out-of-hand and can be made into jellies, jams and wine. The skin is high in tannin and should not be consumed in large quantities over a long period of time.

Jaboticaba makes an attractive landscape plant and is an excellent bonsai subject.

Fruit makes an excellent red wine.

Jaboticaba trees will take full sun or some shade and are small enough fit into many parts of the garden landscape. It grows and fruits best in rich deep soil with a pH of 5.5 to 6.5 and an assured water supply. Young trees do best with some protection as they are moderately frost tolerant taking temperatures down to about -3°C. This is a slow-growing tree that will take up to 7 years to fruit from seed.

Propagation

Propagation is easy from seed although as with all of the *Eugenia* family seed has only a short shelf-life of 6 to 8 weeks. Germination 21 to 28 days at 20°C plus.

Propagation is straight forward without the need of pre-treatment apart from soaking the seed for several hours

Sow seed in a good quality potting mix. Press the seed into the media so that it is just lightly covered. Keep the medium moist but not damp. Place the pot or tube in a warm place out of direct sunlight.

Prick seedlings out into individual containers at 10 cm and grow on as required.