

## Pleiogynium timorense – Burdekin Plum

Pleiogynium timorense, commonly known as Burdekin plum is a tropical, rainforest tree which may reach 20m but which is usually smaller in cultivation. It is found naturally in vine thickets, gallery rainforest and along creek lines in tropical Queensland and Papua New Guinea.

Burdekin plum has a dark grey trunk and often glossy, compound leaves. They are dark, shiny green with bronze new growth. Flowers are relatively inconspicuous with male and female flowers occurring on separate trees. The fruits are large and fleshy and, when ripe, are deep purple in colour. Flowering occurs in Winter and Spring and the fruits ripen in Summer and Autumn.

Burdekin plum is an edible bush food or bush tucker. The fruit is palatable and, although fairly astringent, can be made into excellent jams.

The tree is a hardy and attractive species for sub tropical and tropical areas and can also be grown in inland areas if water is available. It is fairly slow growing and is best suited to well drained, reasonably rich soils.

### Propagation

Propagation is usually carried out from seed but cuttings are also successful.

Seeds germinate readily when soaked for 24 hours prior to planting. The hard seedcoat of the plum stone contains several seeds and benefits from being lightly cracked with a hammer by hitting on the side or by heavy scarification by being scratched before being soaked in warm water. Take care not to damage the raised sections on the top of the seed, just thin lightly. Seeds are then sown in moist, warm compost.

Press seed into the medium until lightly covered. Keep moist but not damp. Covering the seed container with a plastic film helps to maintain moisture and humidity but should be removed daily in the evening and re-affixed in the morning.

Plant seedlings out at 40cm or as desired.

They grow best in well-drained organic, loam or sandy soils. Good growth and fruit production can be induced with regular moisture but trees do not require fertiliser application, although it can benefit with occasional potassium application. Tree spacing should be at least 10m apart.

This species grows best in tropical and subtropical climates but can tolerate temperatures toward freezing and is grown as far south as Sydney. Mature trees are quite drought tolerant.