

West Indies, Tropical America

- Common names:** Eng: soursop; Swah: mstafeli.
- Ecology:** An exotic fruit tree planted throughout the warm tropical lowlands and requiring high humidity. Commonly planted throughout Tanzania, it does best at the coast and on Zanzibar and Pemba islands, but has also been grown up to 1,000 m, e.g. at Amani. Most soils are suitable, but good drainage is required and the tree is shallow rooted. This Annona is the least hardy of the group but has the largest fruit, \-A kg in weight, but normally less than this.
- Uses:** Food (fruit), **drink**, medicine, ornamental, insecticide, **fish** poison.
- Description:** A slender evergreen tree 5-7 m in height, usually less, with a bole up to 30 cm in diameter, the **branches low** and wide, giving an open shady crown. **BARK:** grey with a pattern of shallow grooves. **LEAVES:** alternate, **dark green, shiny** and leathery, 8-15 cm long, **oval with a sharp tip**, dull or yellowish below where there are **small pits in vein** axils. Crushed leaves have an unpleasant smell. **FLOWERS:** **solitary and large**, 2-5 cm across, often opposite leaves and hanging down, **3 outer fleshy petals**, almost triangular, **3 inner yellow-green petals**, **thinner** and rounded, edges overlapping. **FRUIT:** kidney or **heart-shaped** to 25 cm, the leathery dark green skin covered with soft **curved** spines. Inside **white** fibrous **pulp** covers many large brown-black seeds. (Single fruits grow together making one "compound" fruit each with its own spine.) The fleshy parts are edible and have a distinctive taste. The fruit may have an irregular shape. Harvest when the fruit are still firm but have become dull not shiny.
- Propagation:** Seedlings.
- Seed info.:**
- treatment:** not necessary.
- storage:** can be stored for several months.
- Management:** Regular weeding, pruning above 1 m to encourage branching. This small tree can be intercropped with larger fruit trees until they overgrow it.
- Remarks:** This is a desirable tree, but only for home gardens as yields are generally low and unreliable. The delicious fruit can be sold or used for juice and flavouring. Inadequate pollination by insects is a main factor. One tree rarely produces more than a dozen fruit, which take 3 months to ripen. All parts have insecticidal properties and can be used to kill fish.

*Annona muricata*

*Annonaceae*

