

Casimiroa edulis

Rutaceae

Central America**COMMON NAMES:** English: White sapote, Mexican apple.**DESCRIPTION:** A medium-sized evergreen tree up to 12 m, much branched with a short trunk and leafy hanging branches. **BARK:** Smooth, pale brown. **LEAVES:** Alternate and compound with 3–5 lobes, each long oval and shortly stalked to the centre, surface shiny green.**FLOWERS:** Small, green-white-yellow in loose heads beside leaves, 5 petals. **FRUIT:** Green and rounded at first ripening green-yellow, with soft skin and sweet white pulp around 2–5 large dark seeds, 8–10 cm across, like an apple.**ECOLOGY:** A fruit tree originally from the highlands of Mexico and Central America now widely grown in the tropics. In Kenya, it is grown in the warm areas, especially Coast, Central and Eastern Provinces at 0–2,400 m. Agroclimatic Zones II–IV.**USES:** Firewood, edible fruit, bee forage, windbreak.**PROPAGATION:** Seedlings.**SEED:** Air-dry seed after extraction from the fruit and sow, preferably immediately, but not more than 2 months later since viability declines rapidly. Seedlings can be budded or grafted for good variety.**treatment:** No other treatment required.**storage:** Avoid storage and definitely do not store more than 2 months.**MANAGEMENT:** Slow to establish but grows fast once established. Light pruning may be required for the most vigorous types during the first 2 years.**REMARKS:** Bees are needed to increase fruit setting by pollination. In the drier areas it has been recorded as fruiting after 8–9 years. In favourable conditions a mature tree produces much fruit each year. Grafted trees should fruit in 2 or 3 years and there are many varieties. The tree has a vigorous root system so plant well away

from buildings. Crops may also be adversely affected, especially when soil moisture is limited. Casimiroas are highly nutritious, being rich in vitamins A and C as well as carbohydrate and protein. Sugar content is as high as 27%.

FURTHER READING: Bein et al., 1996; Dharani, 2002; Fichtl and Adi, 1994; Verheij and Coronel, 1993.