

Physalis peruviana

Solanaceae

South America

Common names: **English:** Cape gooseberry **Luganda:** Ntuntunu **Runyoro:** Ntuutu **Rutoro:** Ntuutu.

Ecology: An exotic cultivated fruit which in East Africa often becomes naturalized spreading rapidly and widely as a harmless weed in gardens and on arable land. In Uganda it grows in secondary scrub and abandoned plantations and is cultivated for its fruit.

Uses: Food (fresh fruit, jam, jelly), medicine.

Description: An erect or trailing perennial herb or bushy shrub to 1 m, **all parts softly hairy**. **LEAVES:** oval to triangular, softly hairy, edge wavy with a few irregular teeth, **tip long pointed**, base rounded, 8-10 cm long. **FLOWERS:** single and hanging down on thin stalks to 8 mm, each **funnel-shaped flower** 10-15 mm across, **cream yellow with large brown patches**, 5 petals, 5 stamens, the calyx bell-shaped with 5 lobes. **FRUIT:** the calyx enlarges to about 4 cm long becoming thin and papery. It hangs down on a thin stalk like a small 10-ribbed lantern, pointed below. Inside a soft edible berry fruit develops, green then **bright orange**, containing many seeds in rather acid flesh. Probably eaten and spread by birds.

Propagation: Direct sowing on site, wildings, seedlings.

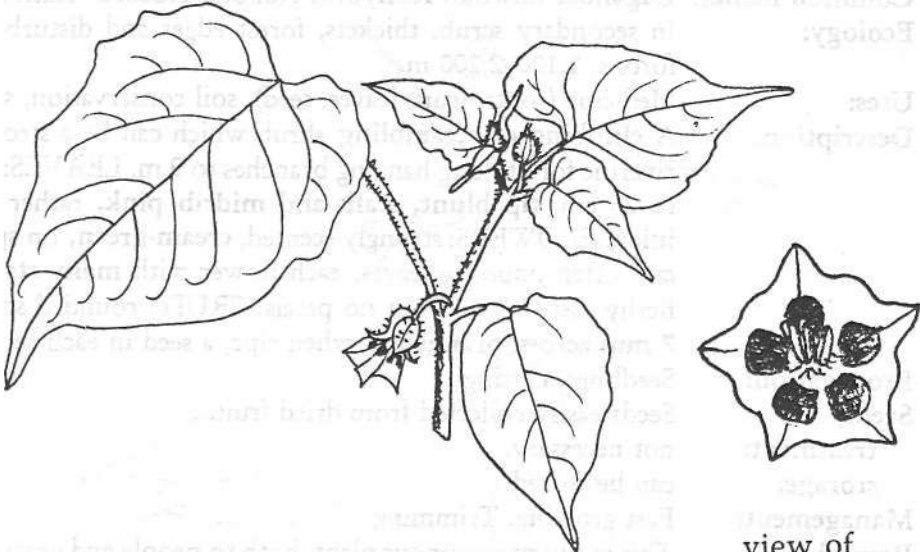
Seed: The berry must be crushed and put out to dry in the sun. Separate the seeds from the dry pulp.

treatment: not necessary. The seeds germinate just a few days after sowing.

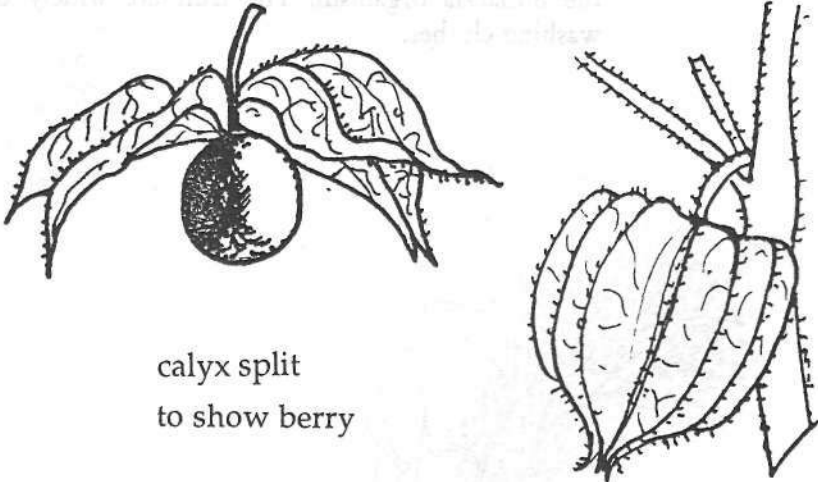
storage: store in sealed containers in a cool place.

Management: Fast growing.

Remarks: In rural areas this plant is regarded as providing fruit for children. However, it is marketed in Kampala and is also used to treat epileptic convulsions in children. Can be planted as an intercrop with maize or sugar cane or as an orchard fruit for commercial sales.



view of
open flower



calyx split
to show berry