

# Psidium guajava

*Myrtaceae*

South and Central America

Common names: Eng: guava; **Swah:** mpera.

Ecology: Originates from South America, probably Brazil. Now grown throughout the tropics, including tropical and sub-tropical America, the warmer sub-tropics elsewhere and throughout Africa south of the Sahara. In Tanzania it is grown mainly along the coast at present, but village conditions over much of the interior are equally suitable. It grows at most altitudes in a variety of soils and is drought hardy but cannot tolerate waterlogging, 0-2,000.

Uses: Firewood, tool handles, posts, food (fruit, jam, jelly, juice), medicine (bark, leaves, roots), shade, soil conservation, live fence.

Description: A small evergreen tree to 8 m, branching irregularly. BARK: smooth light brown, young shoots **4-sided**. LEAVES: **opposite, oval, to 15 cm**, side veins clear and parallel, **hairy below**. FLOWERS: white, 1-3 together, many stamens, each about 2 cm across. FRUIT: yellowish, rounded and heavy to 6 cm, the calyx lobes persistent. Flesh gritty, sweet, pink, white or yellow, hard angular seeds within. Bats distribute seed.

Propagation: Seedlings, wildings, root suckers, direct sowing.

Seed info.: No. of seeds per kg: about 500,000.

treatment: not necessary,

storage: seed can be stored.

Management: Fast growing; pollarding, lopping, pruning, coppicing.

Remarks: The tree may become a weed on good sites, very often colonizing unused sites. It is best planted away from crops due to root competition. Trees begin to bear fruit after 2 years and continue fruiting up to 30 years. Improved varieties (fruit size and quality) exist. The fruit are rich in vitamin C. The wood is termite resistant. Commercial cultivation is carried out in India where seedless varieties have been developed.

