

Psidium guajava

Myrtaceae

South and Central America

English: Guava
Nyanja: Gwawa
Senga: Gwaba
Tumbuka: Gwawa

Ecology: A small fruit tree widely cultivated in the tropics, including Africa. It is grown at most altitudes, 0–2,700 m, in most soils but does not withstand waterlogging. It is drought-hardy and found all over Zambia in villages and gardens.

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

Description: A small evergreen tree to 8 m, branching irregularly. **BARK:** smooth pale brown, later peeling off, young shoots 4-sided. **LEAVES:** large and oval to 15 cm, **side veins prominent, hairy below**, in opposite pairs. **FLOWERS:** white, about 2 cm across, many stamens. **FRUIT:** rounded to 6 cm, tipped by remains of calyx. Colour white to pink depending on variety. Flesh sweet but containing many hard angular seeds.

Propagation: Seedlings, direct seeding.

Seed: No of seeds per kg: $\pm 500,000$.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Seed can be stored.

Management: Pollarding, lopping, pruning, coppicing.

Remarks: Common around homesteads. The tree may become a weed on good sites. Trees begin to bear fruit after 3 years and continue fruiting up to 30 years. The fruit is rich in vitamin C. Wood is termite-resistant. In Eastern Province there has been an increase in planting of this tree by small-scale farmers. It is best planted away from crops due to root competition. Boiled leaves are used to treat diarrhoea and bleeding wounds, while leaves boiled with sugar and salt are used to treat eczema and abscesses.

