

PULSAN - SWEETER THAN HONEY

The pulsan, *Nephelium mutabile*, is an ultra tropical fruit closely resembles to the rambutan. The name pulsan comes from the Malay word, pulsan, mean to twist. The fruit is opened by twisting the fruit with both hands. Pulsan is believed to be originated in the Malay Archipelago.

Planting of seeds are not favored because the seedlings may be male or female and may not be true-to-type. As with rambutan, the preferred planting material is budling. The tree requires less spacing than rambutan. The outer skin of the fruit has spiky soft tubercles. The pulp is white or creamy-white and translucent. The pulp is juicy, very sweet and has a mild flavor. The fruit has a single seed which has the size and shape of an almond. The seed can be easily separated from the pulp. Pulsan can be frozen or dried and used to flavor ice-cream and puddings. It can also be made into preserves, jams, jellies and sauces. It reduces the body fat. So it is good for people who are obese. Eating pulsan makes skin softer and has good use in hair care.

Pulsan can be grown as an ornamental tree. The tree can attain a height of up to 15 m. The tree blooms in February/March. After flowering, the fruits start to mature and ripe in 15 to 18 weeks time. The fruit season extends from June to July. Fruits are harvested in bunches when they turn deep red.

There are male and female trees available in pulsan. The budlings produce predominantly "bisexual" flowers, and a very few percentage of male flowers. Hence the anthers from "bisexual" flowers do not dehisce and pollen grains are not available for pollination, a high percentage of fruits turn to be "flats." Planting male tree in the orchards help availability of pollen grains to the female flowers. Spraying 5 g/l of potassium nitrate during the initial stage of fruit set also helps overcoming "flat" fruit formation if, the mechanism is due to lack of pollination. Additionally, foliar spray of 10 ppm NAA (Superfix) on young inflorescences when 10% of the flowers were open, can be adopted to convert some of the "bisexual" flowers to male, and thus enhancing pollen availability.

HOW TO PLANT

Commercial plantation of pulsan is not recommended because of several reasons. Flowering and fruit set are erratic and sometimes "flat" fruit formation is prevalent. Being a thermosensitive plant and it cannot tolerate high temperature, not all tropical sites could be selected for its cultivation. High humidity and well distributed annual rainfall of at least 200 cm is required for its growth and development. Well drained loamy soil with a pH of 5 to 6, having good organic matter content is ideal for pulsan cultivation. Availability of good irrigation water and ample sunlight are pre-requisites for pulsan cultivation. Pits of 3x3x3 size should be filled with top soil mixed with 3 pots of well decomposed cow-dung manure or compost and 1 kg of Rajphos or Superphosphate. Make a planting hole at the center of the pit having the size of the budling soil ball. Although pulsan prefers lots of organic matter for flourishing, judicious application of compound fertilizers are also recommended. Consider giving 10 to 20 kg of leaf litter/compost annually to correct micronutrient deficiency, if any.

Fortunately, pests and diseases have not been a major problem. Sometimes mild infestation of mealy bugs on fruits are observed. They could easily managed by spraying 10 ml/l Verticillium or spraying dilute solution of neem soap.