



ACHACHAIRU

Achachairu, whose literal meaning is honey kiss, also known by the abbreviation Achacha is a fruit that made an entry into the global fruit market from the Amazon forests. Maintaining substantial resemblance to Mangosteen and Brindleberry (Kudampuli), this fruit has the shape of a rather large chicken egg and the edible portion is a ravishing combination of sweetness and tanginess. The rind is very thin, shiny orange in colour, can be easily peeled off revealing a soft and fleshy edible portion which could be easily separated from the seed that remains in the core. Commercial cultivation of Achacha is fast progressing in Australia and Bolivia. Fruits need an extra month to ripen when compared to the ripening time of Mangosteen.

The symmetric tree architecture finally lends it a parabolic shape with well shaped lateral branches which take the canopy diameter of a fully grown tree to 30 odd feet. Both the radius and the density of the canopy are greater than those of Mangosteen. Planting is done at a spacing of 30 feet each between rows and plants and unlike Mangosteen it survives well even in the absence of any special care except providing sufficient shade during initial three years. Beyond that shade has no bearing upon either growth or yield. The root structure is sturdier and wind resistant in comparison to Mangosteen.

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Irrespective of location and soil structure the plant exhibits uniform growth rate and hence it is expected to grow well in all areas of Kerala. The only resemblance to Mangosteen remains limited to the immature phase of six to seven years and the necessity of shade during the early years. Upon attaining maturity each tree is expected to give 75-150 kilogram yield.

Achacha offers high potential for apiculture as well because of the profuse flowering, which is much more than what is required for fruition. The honey collected from Achacha gardens stands uniquely apart with its impressive flavor. Australia that tops the production of Achacha stands foremost in the production of honey as well. The unparalleled taste and smell of this honey fetches it premium price in the market.

Fruits, though initially appear green in colour turns to yellow as they get ripened and finally to orange hue with a reddish tint by the time of harvest. Fruits stay safe for two weeks in 18°C temperature. Though budded or grafted planting materials may be produced, it is found that seedlings made from elderly trees are ideal for planting because the former cannot assure either longevity or high yield.

The ideal climatic factors include 18-38°C atmospheric temperature, moist soil, annual rainfall exceeding 150 cms and minimum 80 rainy days a year and 50-85% relative humidity. In Kerala conditions harvest season falls almost in line with that of Mangosteen, but with an additional benefit of one extra month. It is better to keep fruits in the normal atmospheric temperature because refrigeration has shown to cause wrinkling on the skin. The rind has been employed in soft drinks and sweet and savoury snack industry as a taste enhancer. Fruits are a reservoir of antioxidants and vitamins.