

SYZYGIUM CUMINI (L.) SKEELS

Myrtaceae/Myrtle Family

Common Names: Java plum, jambolan, jamun, duhat

Synonymy: *Syzygium jambolana* (Lam.) DC., *Eugenia cumini* (L.) Druce, *E. jambolana* Lam.

Origin: Southeast Asia, India

Botanical Description: Evergreen tree to 25 m (80 ft) tall, with young stems grayish white and lower bark coarse and discolored. Leaves opposite, simple, entire, elliptic to broadly oblong, smooth, glossy, somewhat leathery, 5-10 cm (2-5 in) long, short pointed at tips; petioles to 3 cm (1.2 in) long; leaf midrib prominent, yellowish; blades with many lateral veins closely parallel. Flowers white to pinkish, about 1 cm (0.5 in) across, in branched clusters at stem tips; calyx cuplike; 4 petals, fused into a cap; many stamens. Fruit an ovoid, 1-seeded berry to 2 cm (0.8 in) long, dark purplish red, shiny, with white to lavender flesh.

NOTE: May be confused with another naturalized non-native, the rose apple, *Syzygium jambos* Alston, but its habit smaller, to 15 m (50 ft) in height; its leaves longer, to 25 cm (10 in) long; its petals free, not fused into a cap; and its fruits cream-yellow.

Ecological Significance: Introduced into Florida for ornament and edible fruit by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, with seeds from the Philippines in 1911 and 1920, and from Java and Zanzibar in 1912 (Popenoe 1939). Long recommended as a shade tree but considered messy (Broschat and Meerow 1991). Noted as naturalized in southern Florida by 1982 (Wunderlin). Now one of the more rapidly spreading non-native species, forming dense canopies that shade out young native trees in wet pinelands, hammocks, and well drained uplands (Duever *et al.* 1986). Reported from 17 natural areas in Pinellas, Lee, Collier, Dade, Palm Beach, and Martin counties (EPPC 1996). Naturalized on all islands of Hawaii, where it excludes native as well as introduced plants, such as *Schinus terebinthifolius* (Wagner *et al.* 1990).



Leaves

Distribution: Found in peninsular Florida, mostly in southernmost counties; documented by herbarium specimens from Palm Beach, Collier, and Lee counties (Wunderlin *et al.* 1995). Native from India to Myanmar and East Indies, but widely cultivated in tropics (Bailey and Bailey 1976). Naturalized in Hawaii (Wagner *et al.* 1990), Australia (Oommachan 1977, Morton 1987), the Philippines, Zanzibar, Pemba, Mombassa, and Kenya (Morton 1987).

Life History: Restricted to areas with minimum temperatures above 1.7°C (35°F) (Broschat and Meerow 1991). Thrives in low wet areas as well as higher well-drained land, including loam, sand, or oolitic limestone (Morton 1987). Observed most often in Big Cypress National Preserve on damp pineland sites but also on regularly inundated but relatively high spots in cypress strands and sawgrass marshes (Duever *et al.* 1986). Does well in its native range in areas with as much as 1,000 cm (400 in) of annual rainfall and withstands prolonged flooding (Morton 1987). Common in the dry zone of its native range, in all forms of forest but especially along margins of streams and ponds (Dassanayke and Forsberg 1981). Resistant to coastal high winds, but not to heavy salt spray and overwash (Menninger 1964). Does not do well in highly saline, or sodic, soils (Gill and Abrol 1991). Produces fruit in 5-6 years when grown from seeds (Burkill 1935). Flowers year-round (Wunderlin 1982), but mostly in the spring. Seeds dispersed by birds and mammals, including raccoons and wild hogs. Dispersed in Hawaii primarily by myna birds (Morton 1987). Used in fruit preserves, but fruit considered “rarely worth eating” by some (Menninger 1964). Closely related to *S. aromaticum* (L.) Merr., the dried flower buds of which form the spice known as “cloves” (Willis 1973).



Fruits



Flowers, fruits, and leaves