

## California Avocado Society 1945 Yearbook 30: 36-40

### The Nomenclature of Certain Subtropical Fruits

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The careless or erroneous use of common and scientific names of subtropical fruit plants and particularly the former has in many instances led to misunderstanding and ambiguity. To improve this situation, the Minor Subtropical Fruits Committee of the California Avocado Society has appointed a sub-committee to study this problem and to make recommendations to plantsmen and those concerned with the fruits. This progress report is presented with the hope that more careful and uniform employment of nomenclature for the subtropical fruits will result. The fruits considered in the present report and the nomenclature recommended are the following:

Common Name	Botanical Name
loquat	<i>Eriobotrya japonica</i>
feijoa	<i>Feijoa sellowiana</i>
cherimoya	<i>Annona cherimola</i>
Macadamia nut	<i>Macadamia ternifolia</i>
white sapote	<i>Casimiroa edulis</i>
African carissa	<i>Carissa grandiflora</i>
guava	<i>Psidium guajava</i>
Cattley guava	<i>Psidium cattleianum</i>
yellow Cattley	<i>Psidium lucidum</i>
kaki persimmon	<i>Diospyros kaki</i>
American persimmon	<i>Diospyros virginiana</i>
lotus persimmon	<i>diospyros lotus</i>
tuna	<i>Opuntia sp.</i>
purple passionfruit	<i>Passiflora edulis</i>

During the course of this study many sources have been consulted for common names of the species concerned, including such standard reference works as Bailey's **Cyclopaedia of Horticulture**, Macmillan's **Tropical Gardening, Standardized Plant Names**, and **Webster's New International Dictionary** (2nd edition, 1937). The latter work, it may be remarked, contains several inaccuracies regarding botanical and horticultural nomenclature. Numerous texts, crop handbooks, nursery catalogues from various states and countries were consulted, as were also pertinent publications from research stations, also several privately issued pamphlets on file in the University of California Department of Agriculture Library (Los Angeles).

Common names of plants can be useful to the trade and to plant lovers if agreement can be reached concerning their application. A rose by any number of other names may be just as sweet, but confusion and misunderstanding results when we talk about a rose and use another name for it. Consistent effort should be made, therefore, to practice good usage for the common names applied to horticultural plants. The fact remains that no rules or official guidance exist which govern the use of common names for plants, whereas botanical and horticultural nomenclature and the names of varieties are

governed by rather well defined, universal rules which state how a plant shall be properly named.

Since the common name for a plant is not governed by rules, the name is often local in origin and may vary from place to place. It seems reasonable, however, that universal preference for a common name should be given to that name used in the area in which the plant originated or in which the plant has become of outstanding economic importance, provided that name can be expressed in convenient anglicized form. If several local common names are applied to a given plant, then a choice is required. The final selection of the name should be determined with certain objectives in mind. First, the name should be distinctive such that it cannot be easily confused with common names of other fruits. Secondly, it should be descriptive of some important character, the locale, the history or the scientific name of the plant. Thirdly, the common name should be short, limited to two words at most, and easy to pronounce.

The list of common names presented here for the species has been arrived at after consideration of the many synonyms by which these plants have been known or are now known. The name suggested seems to be that most logical in that it is widely associated with the species, is descriptive thereof, or is the least likely to prove ambiguous.

### **Loquat (Japanese medlar, Japanese plum, Biwa)**

The loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica*) has long been a popular and important economic fruit in the Orient, and especially so in Japan since the eighteenth century. It has variously been referred to in Europe and America under such common names as Japanese or Japan medlar, Japanese or Japan plum, and the Biwa of Japan. The loquat, although related to the true medlar, **Mespilus germanica**, is an evergreen and cannot properly be included with the medlar. It is not a true plum, besides there is an important group of true plums belonging to the species **Prunus salicina**, which are more properly known as Japanese plums.

The confusion in regard to the nomenclature of the loquat became a matter of concern to the Florida Nurserymen's Association in 1888 which, at that time, voted to use the name "loquat" for the common name of this fruit. This has received universal recognition as a common English name both here and in other English speaking countries and in Japan. The name "loquat" is adequate, distinctive, and widely accepted and should be continued in use.

### **Feijoa (pineapple guava)**

The feijoa (pronounced fay-ah-o'-a) (**Feijoa sellowiana**) is an attractive ornamental and economic fruit plant whose native home is in southern Brazil and Paraguay. Its distinctive coriaceous foliage and attractive silvery white flowers with crimson stamens have made the plant popular in California as a landscape shrub. The name "pineapple guava" was suggested for this plant by Popenoe in 1912. Although the aroma of the fruit is somewhat reminiscent of pineapple, the plant and its fruit in general do not resemble closely the true guavas in many respects. The feijoa plant and fruit are much hardier

and the plant is a true subtropical with a range of adaptation which greatly exceeds that of any of the true guavas. The pubescent, coriaceous foliage and distinct, attractively colored flowers makes it outstanding from its myrtle relatives. To avoid possible ambiguity, the terms guava and pineapple should not be associated with this plant. An addition to the existing confusion is the fact that Webster's New **International Dictionary** (second edition 1937) gives the strawberry guava as an equivalent to the pineapple guava.

As there is only one known species of **Feijoa** of horticultural importance or promise, the application of the name "feijoa" (not capitalized) as the common name for **Feijoa sellowiana** seems warranted.

### **Cherimoya (cherimoyer, chirimoya, custard apple)**

**Annona cherimola** is the botanical name of the cherimoya, generally considered much the finest of the custard apple group. The use of "custard apple" as its name is not desirable, however, as this term is generally applied to the fruits of most or all species of this genus, and more particularly to the fruits of **A. reticulata**. Moreover, the term "custard apple" is sometimes applied to its distant relative the pawpaw (**Asimina triloba**) of southeastern United States. The common name "cherimoya" is proper for the species **Annona cherimola** and is well established and widely known throughout the world, for which reason no misunderstanding can result from its continued use. There has been developed by hybridization the **atemoya** (cross between **Annona cherimola** and **A. squamosa**) which may or may not resemble the cherimoya, but should not be confused with it.

### **Macadamia Nut (Australian nut, Macadamia, Queensland nut)**

One of the more recent additions to our list of economic plants has been the Macadamia nut (**Macadamia ternifolia** and var. **integrifolia**). This plant is a native of Australia and is the only widely known nut from that continent. The delicious flavor and high nutritional character of the nut has gained it considerable popularity, such that commercial plantings have been made in Australia and also in Hawaii. The Australians often refer to it as the Queensland nut, though it is certain that it is native to a region larger than Queensland. Two or more species of the genus exist, which bear very similar fruits. **M. ternifolia** bears only one crop of nuts per year and differs in several other minor morphological aspects from **M. ternifolia var. integrifolia**, which is more or less everbearing. The use of "Macadamia nut" as the common name seems desirable for this fruit.

### **White Sapote (Mexican peach, Mexican apple, cochil sapote)**

**Casimiroa echilis**, the white sapote, was named in honor of Cardinal Casimiro Gomez de Ortega, a Spanish botanist of the eighteenth century. The plant is a native of Mexico where it is commonly known as "Zapota blanca," which translated into English gives the name white sapote under which it has long been known. The fruit has sometimes been

erroneously called "sapote" or "sapota" which results in confusion because several other and entirely different fruits are also referred to as sapotes or sapotas. Among these is the sapodilla (**Achras sapota**) of the tropics as well as the common sapote, yellow sapote, and green sapote. Moreover, there is also the Zapota negro, or black sapota. For these reasons **Casimiroa edulis** should always be referred to as the white sapote. Other names which have been applied are cochil sapote, Mexican apple, Mexican peach and matasano. The latter name should not be associated with **C. edulis** proper, but instead with its botanical variety **tetrameria**, which may also be called the woolly-leafed white sapote.

### **African carissa (Natal plum, Carissa, Amatungula, Governor's Thorn)**

**Carissa grandiflora** has generally been known in California and elsewhere as the Natal plum. The generic name Carissa has been used to a considerable extent, but has led to some degree of confusion because it is also used for the closely related **Carissa carandas** of India which also produces an edible fruit that is much esteemed in parts of India for use in pickles, preserves and in other forms of edible products. **C. carandas** has also been called the Natal plum, which is clearly in error and adds further to the ambiguity of these common names. It seems that in this case an especial effort must be made to clearly differentiate these two plants by use of appropriate common names. The generic name Carissa appeals to many as a rather good name for the plant and its fruit. Since it is necessary to be more specific, it is proposed that the name African carissa can be used for **Carissa grandiflora** and Indian carissa for the species **carandas**.

### **Guava (lemon guava, tropical guava, pear guava, yellow guava, Florida guava)**

The nomenclature of the several guavas probably has aroused more controversy than that of any other group of minor fruiting plants with which we are concerned.

The common guava (**Psidium guajava**) which thrives in the more tropical countries of the world and which has escaped from cultivation to become practically wild in Hawaii and parts of Florida, was named by the great botanist Linnaeus in the early 18th century. The plant and its fruit are distinctive and are commonly known throughout the world. The term "guava" is an adequate and accurate descriptive common name which should be applied to this plant.

### **Persimmons**

#### **Kaki-persimmon (Oriental persimmon, Japanese persimmon, kaki, date-plum, Japanese date plum, keg fig)**

The use of the term "persimmon" by itself is somewhat misleading because in California, at least, three species of the genus *Diospyros* are associated with the name. **D. kaki** has been marketed for many decades under several names. This is the persimmon whose fruits are commonly found in the markets and which are characterized by their large size and orange or yellow color.

**D. virginiana**, native to southeastern United States, is another species which is found listed under such names as common persimmon, native persimmon, or American persimmon. The fruit of this species seldom reaches two inches in diameter.

A third species, **D. lotus**, is grown in California not for its edible fruit, which does not become larger than one inch in diameter, but as a rootstock seed source, the very seedy fruit providing an abundance of seedling material. Commonly this species has been called the lotus persimmon, the date plum persimmon, false lote tree, date plum or Italian persimmon.

In order to avoid or to reduce to a minimum the misunderstanding which results from the use of the ambiguous or common names of these three persimmons, it is recommended that the following common names be associated with the given species.

Although extensively cultivated in Japan, the Oriental persimmon, **D. kaki**, almost certainly originated in China. Thus a more appropriate name for this fruit is the Oriental persimmon. However, the lotus persimmon **D. lotus**, is also indigenous to the Orient. To be certain that no possible ambiguity can result, it would seem that the best name for the species **D. kaki** is the kaki persimmon, under which it is already widely known. The term "kaki" associated with the persimmon clearly specifies only one kind of persimmon, namely, the species **D. kaki** and no possible misunderstanding can result from the use of this name.

Among the several common names applied to **D. virginiana** the most distinctive for the species is "American persimmon" because this is truly an American persimmon, being found only in eastern United States. The continued association of this common name with the species is justified.

**D. lotus** is commonly referred to in the trade as the "lotus persimmon" which adequately distinguishes the species and which should be continued in use.

### **Tuna (prickly pear, Indian fig, barbary fig, cactus apple, panini)**

Many species of the genus **Opuntia** have been cultivated for their edible fruits throughout the Mediterranean region and in subtropical areas of the new world. Of these **O. tuna** and **O. ficus-indica** are most commonly grown. The latter is generally preferred as a fruit plant because of its relative freedom from spines. The fruits of the two species, although known under various names in Europe, are commonly known as tunas in Spanish speaking countries and in Mexico, their place of origin. This name, therefore, seems most appropriate as well as euphonious.

### **Purple passionfruit (purple granadilla, sweet cup)**

Some controversy has developed over the use of the term "passion fruit" as the common name for fruits of the genus **Passiflora**, of which there are several of commercial importance. The name "passion fruit" was early associated with these plants because of the religious interpretation and significance given to its most unusual and beautiful floral parts, an origin quite the opposite to that objected to. Since this common name is so well established and generally accepted, it is recommended that it

be retained for the fruits of the genus **Passiflora** and that an effort be made to educate the public as to the correct interpretation and significance of the term "passion." **Passiflora edulis** should therefore properly be called the purple passionfruit or purple granadilla. It cannot simply be called granadilla as some have suggested, for the name granadilla is also used in connection with at least three other species.

### **Cattley guava (Strawberry guava)**

Two other **Psidium** species or forms which are now widely grown as ornamental and fruiting plants in California are the Cattley guava (**P. cattlei-anum**) and a yellow fruited form (**P. cattleianum** var. **lucidum**). Botanists are still not in agreement on the botanical nomenclature of these two plants. Thus one may find both of them listed in the recent edition of Standardized Plant Names as **P. littorale**. Most other references to the fruit give the species for the Cattley guava as **P. cattleianum** instead of **P. littorale**. The listing of the species as **P. littorale** in Standardized Plant Names is, in all probability, in error.

As to the common name for this fruit, that most appropriate is Cattley guava. Strawberry guava has been used as a common name, but this has been of more recent and local origin. The name probably has developed from the fact that to some people the aroma of its fruit is suggestive of strawberry. The plant was early called Cattley guava and is listed as such in a United States Department of Agriculture Division of Pomology report in 1887 and in other old publications. The name "strawberry guava" seems to have developed in association with this plant primarily in California. The yellow fruited form has been grown to some extent and locally has come to be known as the yellow strawberry guava, a decidedly inappropriate and confusing designation for this fruit. A more specific and proper name for the yellow form (**P. lucidum**) is the Yellow Cattley guava.