

Yellow Plum (*Pi'ot*)

By Chelsea Taitano, Extension Assistant I
Joe Tuquero, Extension Agent III
Mark Acosta, Extension Agent I

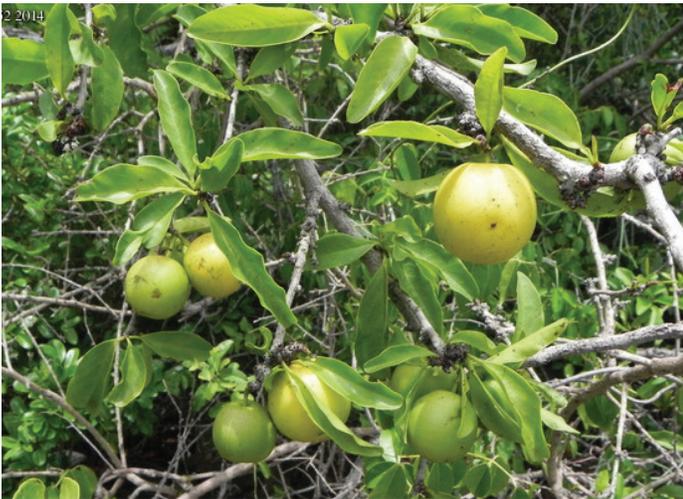


Figure 1
Ximenia americana, commonly known as yellow plum.
Source: gardenbreizh.org

Introduction

Ximenia americana — commonly known as yellow plum and lemon plum or, in Guam, as *pi'ot/pi'ut* — is a pantropical shrub or small tree that is found growing naturally or wildy throughout woodlands or jungles with edible fruits. Yellow plum is native to places with tropical climates that range from throughout Africa to the Americas, Asia, and the Pacific Islands, to include Guam (Mathaluga, 2020). In Guam, yellow plum is known to grow along the coasts and in limestone plateaus where jungles are open and disturbed (Raulerson and Rinehart, 2018).

Growing Yellow Plum

General Plant Characteristics

Yellow plum grows best in climates where temperatures are moderate to warm (80°F). It is often seen growing in soils that are poor or dry; these soils include compositions like clay, clay loam, loamy sand, sandy clay loam, and sand (Kefelgn and Desta, 2021).

Often a small shrub or tree, the yellow plum tree produces edible fruits that drupe from the branches and contains a juicy pulp with one seed. The tree also contains straight

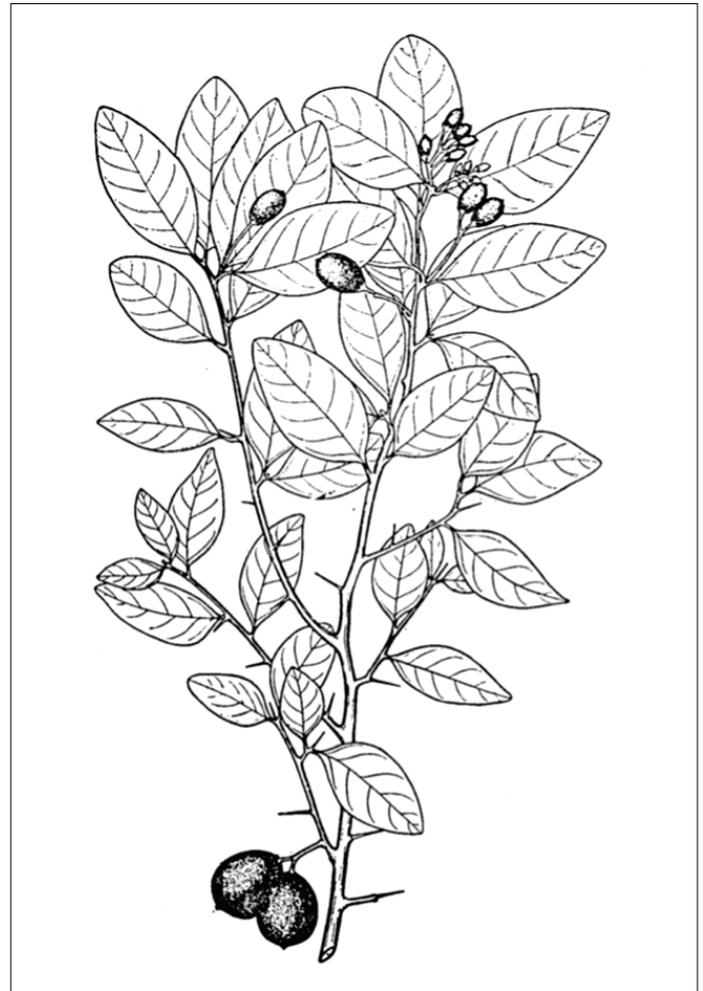


Figure 2
Illustration of *Ximenia americana*.
Source: "The Flora of Guam: A Manual for the Identification of Vascular Plants of the Island" by Benjamin C. Stone

slender spines that run along the branchlets. Flowers are small and fragrant and grow on branched inflorescences.

Propagation and Planting

Yellow plum grows naturally and wildy throughout woodlands or jungles and is rarely grown in domestication; however, the tree can be easily cultivated using fresh seeds and a 5:1 ratio of sand and compost (Mathaluga, 2020). Generally, it takes approximately 14-30 days for

seedlings to germinate. Seedlings can be transplanted after producing a second phase of leaves. Because the tree is semi-parasitic, it will thrive when in contact with other plant roots. Yellow plum grows at a rate of 2 feet per year, and when mature reaches approximately 23 feet in height. The tree requires full sun and is considered to be drought-resistant, which makes it a great source of food during the dry seasons.

Yellow plum can be used as a border and boundary tree in agroforestry if properly cultivated as a hedge plant. Its attractive flowers and foliage allow the plant to be used for ornamental purposes (Orwa, et al, 2009).

Plant Care and Maintenance

Pruning

Because yellow plum is rarely grown in domestication, it is recommended to follow basic fruit tree pruning maintenance methods to encourage optimal tree health and promote larger fruit yields. Pruning should begin once you start to see new growth as it will help manage and control the structure of the tree (Jennings, n.d.).

It is recommended to use sharp pruning shears or a sharp saw to provide a clean cut. Having uneven or ragged edges on branches could prevent the tree from future growth or may make it harder for it to heal. Cuts should always be angled and not straight, flat chops. If removing small branches, use pruners; for thicker branches, handsaws or shears are recommended. Larger pieces of the tree that need pruning should be cut up to the connecting branch. If new growth needs to be thinned out, remove the new shoots at the base. As with all pruning methods, it is most important to prune no more than one-third of a tree. Pruning more may cause severe shock to the tree.

For yellow plum trees, coppicing is a common and recommended practice (Orwa, et al, 2009). Coppicing is a sustainable forestry technique that involves cutting down a mature tree in its entirety to promote regeneration of stumps. This can lead to strong vegetative responses and enhance new shoots from the base.

Irrigation

Yellow plum is a drought-resistant tree. Essentially this means that the tree only needs occasional or little-to-no supplemental watering to grow and produce fruit.

Flowering and Fruiting

The flowers and fruits of yellow plum ripen throughout the year (Orwa, et al, 2009). Yellow plum produces fragrant flowers that are small and range from white, yellow-green,



Figure 3
Flowers of *Ximenia americana* in full bloom.
Source: South African National Biodiversity Institute
(<http://pza.sanbi.org>)



Figure 4
A mature and ripe fruit of *Ximenia americana*.
Source: South African National Biodiversity Institute
(<http://pza.sanbi.org>)

or pink in color. The fruits of the tree are edible and are oval-shaped. They are light green and turn yellow, orange, or red when ripe (Mathalauga, 2020).

Uses and Nutrition

The yellow plum tree has many valuable uses, including for consumption, medicinal purposes, and cosmetic purposes.

Consumption

The fruit of the tree is eaten raw and has a juicy pulp with a sweet-acidic taste. The fruit can be made into preserves or can be pickled or even fermented into beer. The petals of the flowers are often eaten in soups. In

India, oil can be extracted from the seed, which is often used as a substitute for ghee. When roasted, the seeds can be edible; however, if eaten in big quantities, they can act as a laxative (Fern, 2022).

Medicinal Uses

The leaves and twigs of the yellow plum tree act as laxatives and when infused can be used to treat fevers, colds, and toothaches. The leaves also play an important role in treating headaches and are an ingredient for poison antidote. The roots of the tree are used to treat skin ulcers (Fern, 2022).

Cosmetic and Other Uses

The fruit, seeds, and flowers of the yellow plum tree all produce an oil that can be used in cosmetics or other holistic products. The seed produces an oil that is often used for soap for the body and hair. The flower secretes an essential oil that is a great substitute for orange blossom. The bark and roots of the tree are ingredients in tanning lotions and used in strengthening indigo dyes (Fern, 2022).

For More Information

Contact the University of Guam Cooperative Extension & Outreach office at (671) 735-2080 for help or more information. Additional publications can be found at uog.edu/extension/publications.

References

Fern, K. (2022). *Ximenia americana*. The Useful Tropical Plants Database. <https://tropical.theferns.info/viewtropical.php?id=Ximenia%20americana>.

Jennings, S. (n.d.). *Pruning tropical fruit trees: What to prune and how*. Homesteadin' Hawai'i. <https://www.homesteadinhawaii.com/pruning-tropical-fruit-trees-what-to-prune-how>.

Kefelegn, G.A., & Desta, B. (2021). *Ximenia Americana: Economic importance, medicinal value, and current status in Ethiopia*. *The Scientific World Journal*, 2021, 1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2021/8880021>.

Mathalauga, M. (2020). *Ximenia americana var. Microphylla*. *Ximenia americana var. microphylla* | PlantZAfrica. <http://pza.sanbi.org/ximenia-americana-var-microphylla>.

Orwa, C., Mutua, A., Kindt, R., Jamnadass, R., & Anthony, S. (2009). *Ximenia Americana - World Agroforestry Centre*. Agroforestry Database 4.0. https://apps.worldagroforestry.org/treedb/AFTPDFS/Ximenia_americana.pdf.

Raulerson, L., & Rinehart, A.F. (2018). *Olacaceae (WF) Ximena americana*. *Trees and shrubs of the Northern Mariana Islands* (p. 80) essay, University of Guam Press, R.F.T. Micronesian Area Research Center, University of Guam.

Published: July 7, 2023

This publication was funded by Western SARE grant number RGR20-003.



© 2023 University of Guam Cooperative Extension & Outreach, College of Natural & Applied Sciences, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. All rights reserved.

The University of Guam is a U.S. Land Grant and Sea Grant institution accredited by the WASC Senior College & University Commission. UOG is an equal opportunity provider and employer committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion through island wisdom values of *inadahi yan inagoffi'e*: respect, compassion, and community.

This publication is available in alternate forms upon request by calling the UOG EEO/ADA/Title IX Office at (671) 735-2971/2244 or email efgogue@triton.uog.edu.

Find UOG extension publications at uog.edu/extension/publications. For reproduction and use permission, contact cnsteam@triton.uog.edu, (671) 735-2060.