

Davidson and Illawarra plums

Introduction

Along with the 'major' native food crops, such as quandong, native citrus, muntries and wattleseed – which are covered by individual fact sheets - there are a number of other native food plants with potential for increased production in South Australia.

Two tree crops with 'plum-like' fruits are described in this publication – Davidson Plum and Illawarra Plum.

Illawarra Plum (*Podocarpus elatus*)

Description

Sometimes known as the Brown Pine. It is an evergreen, upright conical to spreading tree of variable height (5 to 35 m). Foliage is dark glossy green, new growth is an attractive lime green. Male flowers (catkins) and female flowers carried on separate trees. Blue-black (plum like) fruits (20 to 30 mm) are carried on female trees, have a waxy bloom, and conveniently carry a large seed attached to the "outside" of the flesh at the opposite end to the stem. Fruit ripens in Autumn to Winter.

Illawarra Plum occurs naturally in 800 to 1,500 mm rainfall areas of temperate to sub-tropical eastern NSW and Qld, on a broad range of soils.

Fruit has a subtle plum/pine flavour, and may be used for savoury and sweet applications (eg. 'plum' and chilli sauces), for chutneys, jams, pies, desserts etc. The fruit should be blended or diced before cooking using stainless steel utensils. Fruits are usually sold frozen.

Production

A member of the conifer family. Despite its large size in nature, it tends to be 5 to 10 m high under cultivation. Size may be contained by pruning or hedging. Requires male (pollinator) and female trees, at a ratio of say 1 pollinator to 10. Early, mid and late season varieties exist. Biennial bearing can be a problem with inferior selections. Tolerant of moderately alkaline soils and moderate frosts. Due to the inherent genetic variability of seedlings, clonally propagated plants of superior selections should be used.



Fig 1. Illawarra plum fruit

Davidson Plum (*Davidsonia pruriens*, *D. jerseyana*)

Description

Some *Davidsonia* species growing in the wild are classified as endangered in N.S.W. A permit is required to sell or pick material from these plants.

The Davidson Plum is known as one of the best of the native 'plums'. It ripens in summer and autumn, is deep burgundy in colour and has a soft, juicy pulp with a sharp acidity. It is produced on a tall, large frond-like leaves that bear irritating hairs.

There are two subspecies – *pruriens* from Queensland and *jerseyana* from Northern Rivers region.

Davidson Plum occurs naturally in rainforest areas in northern NSW and Qld and prefers a friable soil, high in organic matter.

The fruit makes an excellent wine as well as jams and sauces and is used by processors and restaurants.

Production

Davidsonia pruriens is the predominant crop in Queensland. Mostly wild harvested, bearing fruit in winter. The fruit is larger and paler than that of *D. jerseyana*. At present production, although limited, is outweighing demand for this fruit. Some plantings of Davidson Plum have occurred in Eastern States. In cultivation Davidson Plum is frost sensitive and requires shelter from hot, cold and dry winds. Adequate water is required for tree growth, flowering, fruit set and fruit growth. Yields may be variable from season to season.

Potential returns

While these crops may have potential in selected areas in South Australia, it is too early to estimate the potential yields and production costs for these species under cultivation.

Further reading

"The Davidson plum" by Anthony Hotson, in "The new crop industries handbook", Edited by S. Salvin, M. Bourke and T. Byrne, RIRDC 2004, pages 377 – 384.

Further information

Further information on native crops is contained in the other publications in this series:

Australian Native Citrus – Wild Species, Cultivars and Hybrids

Bush Tomato/Desert Raisin Production

Miscellaneous Native Food Crops – Davidson and Illawarra Plums

Miscellaneous Native Food Crops – Herbs and Vegetables with Potential in SA

Mountain Pepper Production

Muntries Production



Fig 2 Davidson plum fruit

Native Food Background Notes
Native Food Crops – Frequently Asked Questions
Quandong Production
The Native Food Industry in SA
Wattleseed Production

These fact sheets are also available for download from the CSIRO/RIRDC Native Foods Website at <http://www.cse.csiro.au/research/nativefoods/> and PIRSA website www.pir.sa.gov.au or from the national PrimeNotes CD.

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