

FGCU Food Forest

Plant Database

Carissa – Natal Plum (*Carissa macrocarpa*)

Quick Facts

Origin: Natal, South Africa

Description: Dynamic, spreading, wooded shrub with white, gummy sap

Culinary Uses: Eaten whole, can be added to gelatins and used as topping for cakes, puddings and ice cream

Harvest: The peak period for blooming and fruiting is May through September

Pests: Spider mites, thrips and whiteflies, and occasionally scale insects, attack young plants, especially in nurseries and in the shade.

Cold Tolerance: As low as 25° F (-3.89° C)

General Description: The Carissa (Natal Plum) is a woody shrub with white sap and can reach up to 18ft tall. The branches contain surrounding thorns, and the evergreen leaves are long and glossy. Its flowers are 2 inches and usually white in color.



- **Native Origin:** The Carissa is native to the coastal region of Natal, South Africa, and is cultured far-off inland in the Transvaal. It was firstly introduced into the United States in 1886 by the horticulturist Theodore L. Meade
- **Harvesting Techniques:** Seeds germinate in 2 weeks but the seedlings grow gradually at first and are extremely flexible. Vegetative circulation is favored and can be done easily by air-layering, ground-layering, or shield-budding. Cuttings root poorly unless the tip of a young branchlet is cut half-way through and left attached to the plant for 2 months. After extraction and planting in sand, it will root in about 30 days. Grafting onto seedlings of the karanda (q.v.) has considerably increased fruit yield.
- **Season of Harvest:** The Carissa flowers and fruits all year, but the ultimate period for blooming and fruiting is May through September.

- **Culinary Uses:** The Carissa needs to be fully ripe, a deep red color, and somewhat soft to be eaten raw. It can be eaten whole, without peeling or seeding. It is also used in fruit salads, adding to gelatins and using as coating for cakes, and ice cream. Carissas can be baked to a sauce or used in pies.
- **Climate:** This plant is considered subtropical, that typically thrives throughout the state of Florida and can tolerate temperatures as low as 25° F (-3.89° C). Young plants need protection when the temperature drops below 29° F (-1.67° C), and optimal growth is obtained in direct sunlight.

Carissa - Natal Plum	
Scientific Classification	
Kingdom:	Plantae
(unranked):	Angiosperms
(unranked):	Eudicots
(unranked):	Asterids
Order:	Gentianales
Family:	Apocynaceae
Genus:	<i>Carissa</i>
Species:	<i>C. macrocarpa</i>

Sources:

Attwater, J. (2011). The carissa: Natal plum.

Retrieved from <http://www.eattheweeds.com/natal-plums-num-num/>

Wilkins, J. (2004). The Carissa.

Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/>