

## **Durian** *Durio zibethinus* Murray

The durian is native to Malaysia and Indonesia. The durian is a tall tree towering as high as 40m in the jungle rainforest or in semi-orchard. Seed trees may take 8-10 years to fruit. The fruit is green to brown in color, pendulous, round to oblong in shape and is completely covered with strong sharp thorns. It is a capsule which splits into five parts when ripe and each segment contains brown seeds covered with thick, firm, creamy, yellow pulp with an “overpowering” aroma. Which no doubt explains the German name for Durian **Stinkfrucht**. The seeds are large, at 4 to 7 centimeters long and 2.5 centimeters wide. On average, an entire durian contains 13 seeds. The edible pulp covers each seed, and varies among cultivars in terms of color, texture, and thickness. It is yellowish white, pale yellow, or orange; buttery; sweet; and let us not forget very, very aromatic.

### **SOIL AND WEATHER REQUIREMENTS**

The durian being a tropical fruit thrives well in humid climate where temperatures range from 25°C - 30°C. However, durian cannot tolerate prolonged dry periods and grow best with an evenly distributed rainfall of between 150 and 200 cm per year. Durian does best in deep, loamy, well-drained soils, high in organic matter, with a pH range of 6 – 7. Poorly drained soils should be avoided since the root system is very sensitive to standing water.

### **PROPAGATION**

Durian is normally propagated by budding. In this method the rootstocks from selected seeds of available fruits are first planted in plastic bags. The seedling rootstocks are allowed to reach about half a meter tall with stem size of 1 cm before they are ready for budding. Four month old seedlings are ideal because they permit good scion growth after the union. Newly budded seedlings should be kept under a 75% shade graduating to 50% shade just before replanting.

### **PRUNING**

Trees are pruned to preserve their health to obtain a desired canopy shape and to enhance production of fruits. The operation consists of the removal of dead, broken or diseased branches and water shoots. This is normally done after the first fruiting season. Pruning permits free circulation of air and allows penetration of sunlight through the canopy.



## PESTS AND DISEASES

The most serious pest of the durian is the fruit borer, which at the larval stage, bores into and feeds on the fruit. Application of recommended insecticide such as BHC is encouraged. Another pest is the leaf cutter which can seriously defoliate young and older trees.

Patch canker is the most serious disease. Affected trees show bark decay, gummosis of the collar and stem collars causing dieback of branches. The whole plant may eventually die and infect other plants. Control is mainly cultural by providing good drainage, removal of vegetation around the trunk and use of resistant root stocks. Affected trees are treated by painting or spraying Ridomil, a systemic fungicide.

## HARVESTING

Budded durians normally start bearing fruit from the fifth year after planting. Durians generally bear one crop a year but may crop twice a year if influenced by the right conditions. Normally durian fruits are allowed to drop when they are fully ripe. However the fruits may be harvested from the tree, as is a common practice in Thailand. By harvesting, not only is the taste much better, but the shelf life could be extended to 9 - 11 days compared to 3 - 4 days when allowed to drop from tree. The harvested fruit is fully ripe when the peduncle splits at the point of abscission.

## YIELD

Initial yield may be 10 - 40 fruits for the first year of fruiting to about 100 fruits for the sixth year. Yield of up to 200 fruits is common after the 10th year of fruiting.

## Classification: *Durio zibethinus* Murray

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**Kingdom** Plantae – Plants

**Subkingdom** Tracheobionta – Vascular plants

**Superdivision** Spermatophyta – Seed plants

**Division (phylum)** Magnoliophyta – Flowering plants

**Class** Magnoliopsida – Dicotyledons

**Subclass** Dilleniidae –

**Order** Malvales –

**Family** Bombacaceae – Kapok-tree family

**Genus** *Durio* Adanson – durio

**Species** *Durio zibethinus* Murray – durian

**The New York Times: July 18, 1994**  
**Love It or Hate It, This Is the Forbidding Fruit**  
by PHILIP SHENON, Special to The New York Times

Whatever the odoriferous riot elsewhere in the steamy climes of Southeast Asia, Singapore as a nation is ruthlessly sweet-smelling. The air in most public buildings is pumped through banks of hyperefficient air conditioners, filtering and re-filtering the air until a visitor might easily forget that this is the tropics. So how, then, to explain the durian?

Virtually unknown outside Asia, the durian is hailed here as the King of Fruits, a spiky, soccer-ball-sized globe beloved by Singaporeans for its sweet, custardy yellow flesh. The durians taste, texture and shape are all distinctive. But what makes the fruit truly unmistakable is the odor a smell so overpowering that generations of Singaporeans have struggled to find a single description that fits.

Among the charitable, printable comparisons: overripe cheese. Rotting fish. Unwashed socks. A city dump on a hot summer's day. Historians report that Sir Stamford Raffles, who established Singapore as a British trading post in 1819, held his nose and ran in the other direction if he caught even a whiff of the dreaded fruit. Another former British governor likened the stench to carrion in custard.

And yet the three million people of this prosperous island city-state cannot get enough of it. According to a popular saying, durians have the smell from hell and the taste from heaven. Another bit of durian lore [...] when the durians come down from the trees, the sarongs come off [...] refers to the fruit's legendary powers as an aphrodisiac.

Durians are an obsession here. No matter how much Singapore's authoritarian Government tries to discourage the consumption of durians, Singaporeans continue to wolf them down, \$30 million worth last year. The fruit is banned from taxis, buses, ferries and the jets of Singapore Airlines. In Singapore's spotless subway system, the authorities have posted no-durians signs, the signs show a durian set in a circle, with a red slash through the center.

Maybe this is our little way of rebelling, said a Singapore businessman, using his teeth to pull the tender fruit from around one of the huge seed pods found at the core of a durian. In Singapore, the Government has given us a nice life. But there is not so much freedom. So maybe we create a little trouble by eating the smelly fruit.

Durians are a costly habit. They are among the world's most expensive fruits, about \$4 a pound at the height of the season, which ends later this month. The best are imported from Malaysia and Thailand, although a few fruit-bearing durian trees are still left standing in Singapore's modern-day forest of concrete and steel.

I'm just crazy about this fruit, I eat it every day, said John Hoe, the founder and owner of Singapore's best known all-durian restaurant, the Four Seasons. On his menu are durian pudding, durian puffs, durian pancakes and tubes of durian paste. For purists, there are plates of raw durian, a taste that has been aptly compared to fermented mango.

Business is obviously good, with the restaurant often packed at night with local durian aficionados and adventurous tourists. Mr. Hoe, an excitable man who nearly shakes with his enthusiasm for the fruit, says that each year he ships literally tons of durians to customers around the world. In Singapore, he whispers, his customers include some of the nations most powerful businessmen and even a Government official or two. I have one customer who spends maybe \$8,000 a year, he says.

Mr. Hoe insists that not only can he stand the smell but he even likes it. I've heard people talk about a bad smell, he said. I think it is an exaggeration. But not, he must admit, a complete one. The restaurant had to be equipped with a special ventilation system that prevents the air from recirculating in the restaurant. For now, durian lovers say, supply is meeting demand here. But fruit-sellers in Singapore warn darkly about the news from Hong Kong, where durians have become a status-symbol gift among the city's wealthy, and of the possibility that the fruit will catch on across the border from Hong Kong in the largest market of all, China.

Most durians grow in the wilds of Southeast Asia, and the deforestation of Thailand and Malaysia is threatening the crop. Durians can be harvested on plantations, but it is not always economically feasible. The finicky trees take as long as 15 years after planting to bear fruit, compared with only three years for mangoes and other popular tropical fruits. The tree remains juvenile for a long time and doesn't produce fruit until it becomes quite old, said Peter Dodd, a lecturer in fruit studies at the University of London, who has been involved in the race to save Singapore and the rest of Southeast Asia from a durian shortage. What were trying to do is reduce the juvenile period.

Mr. Dodd understands the concern about a durian deficit. He is one of the rare Westerners who admits to a fondness for the fruit. The smell certainly is potent, but I did like it, right from the beginning, he said. My wife is not as enthusiastic as I am. She finds the smell a bit overpowering. But he notes proudly that his



marriage is strong enough to withstand even a durian. Oh yes, my wife allows me to eat it in the house, he said. She is very loyal.

Fruit Report: *Durio zibethinus* Murray

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Durian does stir up strong emotions. One either likes it or hates it and there seems to be little in between. It has divided families - but only for brief periods during the peak of the season, when the durian-loving spouse is often banished to the backyard to devour the precious golden fruit.

After you have “experienced” the Durian and read the provided botanical information I would like you to write your own article describing your encounter with the King of Fruits.