



Importance and cultivation technology of West Indian cherry (*Malpighia puniceifolia*)

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West Indian cherry, also known as Barbados cherry is the richest source of vitamin C. It is a medium sized shrub, which thrives well in tropical climate. It is best suited as a homestead fruit crop and prefers a rich well drained soil.

Varieties: Two distinct types are seen.

Pink flower type: Flowers are pink and are born in clusters in leaf axils. Fruits are large in size (about 6 g) and red coloured when ripe.

White flower type : Flowers are white and are borne in clusters in leaf axils. Fruits are small (about 1 g) and orange coloured when fully ripe.

Planting materials: West Indian cherry is usually raised from layers. Vegetative propagation by means of hardwood cuttings along with leaves is feasible, though the percentage of rooting is very low. Air layering is highly successful when treated with IBA. Layers strike roots within 3-4 weeks. When the roots peep out through the ball of moss or coir pith, the stem may be severed in stages. The rooted layer is potted after removing the polythene film and kept in shade till new flushes appear. Plants may be hardened in full sunlight prior to transplanting. Chip budding, shield budding, side grafting and veneer grafting are also successful to a limited extent.

Planting: For planting, pits of size 0.5 m x 0.5 m x 0.5 m are made, 6 m apart. Fill the pit with topsoil and 10 kg cowdung. After planting, mulching may be done with dry leaves to conserve moisture. July to December is considered to be the best time for planting. Irrigation once

in four days during early stages of growth up to one year of planting and later on, once in 7-10 days is necessary.

Manuring: A fully grown, bearing plant should be top dressed with fertilizers @ 100 g N, 160 g P₂O₅ and 260 g K₂O. These may be applied in two splits, in June-July and again in January, when there is sufficient moisture in the soil.

Pruning: Pruning is done once in a year to maintain regular shape. Pruning consists of removal of dried and diseased wood and also the drooping branches.



Flowering, fruiting and

harvesting: Rooted cuttings and layers flower in six months. Flowering commences in the middle of May and extends up to August. The harvest of fruits commences from August and continues up to November. Rarely, flowering is noticed in March and the crop comes to harvest in April / May.

Yield: The average yield during fourth year is 2 kg per plant.

Processing: The fruits may be consumed fresh or its pulp can be used for preparation of juice, jam, jelly, preserve, syrup etc. The juice or pulp may also be used to fortify ascorbic acid contents of various other products. Its juice can be used to blend with other fruit juices to give delicious mixed fruit cocktails and also to improve their nutritive value. As the richest natural source of vitamin C, the fruits have considerable scope to be developed on a commercial basis, for the production of vitamin C.

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