Natal Plum

Carissa macrocarpa

Height: 10 feet

Spread: 10 feet

Sunlight: ○

Hardiness Zone: 9a

Description:

A dense, bushy evergreen broadleaf shrub that forms a great screen; rounded glossy leaves add a tropical element; can be maintained as a hedge as well; attractive blooms and edible fruit; very spiny

Edible Qualities

Natal Plum is a large shrub that is typically grown for its edible qualities, although it does have ornamental merits as well. It produces red oval berries which are typically harvested when mature. The berries have a tart taste and a firm texture.

The berries are most often used in the following ways:

- Cooking
- Preserves

Features & Attributes

Natal Plum has attractive dark green evergreen foliage which emerges coppery-bronze in spring on a plant with an upright spreading habit of growth. The glossy round leaves are highly ornamental and remain dark green throughout the winter. It features dainty lightly-scented white star-shaped flowers along the branches from early spring to mid summer. It features an abundance of magnificent red berries from late spring to late fall.

Natal Plum flowers
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Natal Plum
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

This is a dense multi-stemmed evergreen shrub with an upright spreading habit of growth. Its average texture blends into the landscape, but can be balanced by one or two finer or coarser trees or shrubs for an effective composition. This is a relatively low maintenance plant, and is best pruned in late winter once the threat of extreme cold has passed. It is a good choice for attracting birds and butterflies to your yard, but is not particularly attractive to deer who tend to leave it alone in favor of tastier treats. Gardeners should be aware of the following characteristic(s) that may warrant special consideration;

- Spiny

Natal Plum fruit
Photo courtesy of NetPS Plant Finder

Aside from its primary use as an edible, Natal Plum is sutiable for the following landscape applications;

- Mass Planting
- General Garden Use
- Naturalizing And Woodland Gardens
- Container Planting

Planting & Growing

Natal Plum will grow to be about 10 feet tall at maturity, with a spread of 10 feet. It has a low canopy, and is suitable for planting under power lines. It grows at a slow rate, and under ideal conditions can be expected to live for 40 years or more.

This shrub is quite ornamental as well as edible, and is as much at home in a landscape or flower garden as it is in a designated edibles garden. It should only be grown in full sunlight. It prefers to grow in average to moist conditions, and shouldn't be allowed to dry out. It may require supplemental watering during periods of drought or extended heat. It is not particular as to soil pH, but grows best in rich soils, and is able to handle environmental salt. It is somewhat tolerant of urban pollution. This species is not originally from North America.

Natal Plum is a good choice for the edible garden, but it is also well-suited for use in outdoor pots and containers. Its large size and upright habit of growth lend it for use as a solitary accent, or in a composition surrounded by smaller plants around the base and those that spill over the edges. It is even sizeable enough that it can be grown alone in a suitable container. Note that when grown in a container, it may not perform exactly as indicated on the tag - this is to be expected. Also note that when growing plants in outdoor containers and baskets, they may require more frequent waterings than they would in the yard or garden.