

Types of *jambu*

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ABSTRACT

Jambu is an Indonesian cover term for several tropical fruit trees. Most of these trees belonging to the genus *Syzygium*, although the term *jambu* is now also applied to two New World species introduced into Indonesia. This article provides brief descriptions along with pictures to help lexicographers correctly identify ten principal species grown for their fruits, flowers, or leaves.

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Malay apple; Java apple; Water apple; Malabar plum; Java plum; Indonesian laurel; Clove; Sea apple; Cashew; Guava; Other species.

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Types of *jambu*

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Jambu is an Indonesian cover term for several tropical fruit trees, most of them belonging to the genus SYZYGIUM,¹ although it is now also applied to two New World species introduced into Indonesia. This article provides brief descriptions along with pictures to help you correctly identify nine principal species grown for their fruits, flowers or leaves.

Like Indonesian *jambu air*, the English terms ‘water apple’ and ‘rose apple’ (and the related ‘pomarosa’) are generic terms that can refer to several different species. Therefore in a dictionary you should be sure to identify plants by scientific name once a positive identification has been made. As a further aid to disambiguation, the following table summarizes various English and Indonesian common names that I encountered during the course of compiling this guide.

SYZYGIUM MALACCENSE	Malay apple, Malay rose apple, mountain apple	<i>jambu bol, jambu mérah, jambu dersana, jambu darsana, jambu susu</i>
SYZYGIUM SAMARANGENSE	Java apple, wax apple	<i>jambu semarang, jambu air semarang</i>
SYZYGIUM AQUEUM	water apple, water cherry, watery rose apple	<i>jambu air</i>
SYZYGIUM JAMBOS	Malabar plum, pomarosa, rose apple	<i>jambu mawar, jambu air mawar, jambu kraton</i>
SYZYGIUM CUMINI	Java plum, jambolan	<i>jamblang, jambu jamblang, jambu keling, jambu juwét, duwét</i>
SYZYGIUM AROMATICUM	clove	<i>céngkéh</i>
SYZYGIUM POLYANTHUM	Indonesian laurel (tree), Indonesian bay leaf, Indian bay leaf (leaves)	<i>pohon salam (tree), daun salam (leaves)</i>
SYZYGIUM GRANDE	sea apple	<i>jambu laut</i>
ANACARDIUM OCCIDENTALE	cashew	<i>jambu mété, jambu médé, jambu ménté, jambu monyét</i>
PSIDIUM GUAJAVA	guava, apple guava, common guava	<i>jambu batu, jambu biji, jambu siki, jambu klutuk</i>

¹ Formerly classified as genus EUGENIA. The Malay term is from Sanskrit *jambu* (Jones 2007:133), which Monier-Williams (1899:412) defines as ‘the rose apple tree (EUGENIA JAMBOLANA or another species).’

Malay apple

Malay apple, Malay rose apple, mountain apple = *jambu bol*, *jambu mérah*, *jambu dersana*, *jambu darsana*, *jambu susu* = *SYZYGium MALACCENSE* (L.) Merr. & L. M. Perry

This tree is distinguished by its pinkish-purple to dark red flowers, and pear-shaped fruits that are 2 to 4 inches long, longer than they are wide. Fruits are red, though some have pink or white stripes, and in one variety (the 'white-fruited Malay apple,' Indonesian *jambu susu*) it is entirely ivory-white.

Some sources identify this tree under the synonym *EUGENIA MALACCENSIS* L. This tree is said to be native to Malaysia, though now widely cultivated throughout Indonesia.



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Java apple

Java apple, wax apple = *jambu semarang*, *jambu air semarang* = *SYZYGium SAMARANGENSE* (Blume) Merr. & L. M. Perry

This species can be distinguished from *S. MALACCENSE* in that *S. SAMARANGENSE* has yellowish-white flowers, and fruits that are only 1-1/3 to 2 inches long, wider than they are long. This tree is indigenous from Malaysia to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. While *jambu semarang* doesn't appear in *Kamus Besar*, it is the name supported by the Indonesian version of Wikipedia² and other web sites. Sometimes it is referred to under the now disused synonyms *SYZYGium JAVANICUM* Miq. or *EUGENIA JAVANICA* Lam.



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² Wikipedia Bahasa Indonesia, s.v. "Jambu semarang," http://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jambu_semarang (accessed January 16, 2013).

Water apple

water apple, water cherry, watery rose apple = *jambu air* = *SYZYGium AQUEUM* (Burm. f.) Alston

Fruits of this tree vary from red to light red to white. They are very similar to the Java apple described above, but are typically even smaller, only 5/8 to 3/4 inches long. This species occurs naturally from southern India to eastern Malaysia.



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Malabar plum

Malabar plum, pomarosa, rose apple = *jambu mawar*, *jambu air mawar*, *jambu kraton* = *SYZYGium JAMBOS* (L.) Alston

Flowers are large, white, and showy. Fruits are nearly round or only slightly pear-shaped, 1-1/2 to 2 inches in diameter. Immature fruits are reddish-blushed, but the skin turns greenish, pale yellow or white as the fruits ripen. The calyx at the tip of the fruit is persistent, tough, green and prominent. This fruit is indigenous to Indonesia and Malaysia.



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Java plum

Java plum, jambolan = *jamblang*, *jambu jamblang*, *jambu keling*, *jambu juwét*, *duwét* = *SYZYGium CUMINI* (L.) Skeels

The fruits of this tree somewhat resemble grapes but are even more oblong, and turn from green to light magenta, finally to dark purple or almost black as they ripen. Children like to eat the fruits, which turn their mouths purplish-black. The species name is not spelled CUMINII as in older editions of *Kamus Besar*. Synonyms include *SYZYGium JAMBOLANUM* DC. and *EUGENIA JAMBOLANA* Lam.



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Indonesian laurel

Indonesian laurel (tree), Indonesian bay leaf, Indian bay leaf (leaves) = *pohon salam* (tree), *daun salam* (leaves) = SYZYGIVM POLYANTHUM (Wight) Walp.

Round fruits (about 1/2 inch in diameter) are red to purple-black when ripe, edible, and like the Java plum a favorite of children. However, the tree is better known for its leaves, which are used in cooking similar to bay leaves.

This tree is sometimes identified by its synonym EUGENIA POLYANTHA Wight. The Javanese name is *manting*.



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Clove

clove = *céngkéh* = SYZYGIUM AROMATICUM (L.) Merr. & L.M.Perry

The clove tree is known for its aromatic dried flower buds. If the buds are not picked, the flowers will bloom and develop into small, oblong, dark fruits with little pulp. Cloves are native to the Maluku Islands, and of course had an important role in the spice trade which brought Arab merchants and later European explorers to Indonesia.



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Sea apple

sea apple = *jambu laut*, *jambu air laut* = SYZYGium GRANDE (Wight) Walp.

The sea apple tree has opposite, somewhat leathery leaves. Fragrant, white, pom-pom like flowers appear en masse at the onset of the wet season, borne in clusters at the ends of branches or in the axils of leaves. Mature fruits contain a single seed; they are round, oblong or elliptical, less than 2 inches long, and remain green in color when ripe. These fruits are a food source for animals such as squirrels, bats, monkeys, and birds.

The tree is adapted to growing in coastal habitats, whence the names 'sea apple' and *jambu laut*. It is sometimes also planted along roadsides as a handsome shade tree.



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Cashew

cashew = *jambu mété*, *jambu médé*, *jambu ménté*, *jambu monyét* = ANACARDIUM OCCIDENTALE L.

Cashew trees are native to northeastern Brazil, but were brought by the Portuguese to India in the sixteenth century and are now widely planted in other parts of the world, including Southeast Asia and Africa. Although not a SYZYGIUM species, it is easy to see how cashews are related to *jambu* in a folk classification.

The fruit of the cashew tree consists of an edible, pear-shaped pseudocarp (false fruit, in English the 'cashew apple'), and the kidney-shaped drupe containing a single seed, the cashew nut.



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Guava

guava, apple guava, common guava = *jambu batu*, *jambu biji*, *jambu siki*, *jambu klutuk*, *jambu kelutuk* = *PSIDIUM GUAJAVA* L.

The guava, also called 'apple guava' or 'common guava' to distinguish it from other *PSIDIUM* species, is native to tropical America. It was introduced by the Spanish into the Philippines and by the Portuguese into India.

In Indonesia there are two varieties, one with pink flesh and one with white flesh. There is also a small-fruited variety (fruits smaller than or barely exceeding 1 inch in diameter) called *jambu biji kecil* or *jambu cina*, which some consider to be a separate species, *P. PUMILUM* Vahl. The name *jambu k(e)lutuk* comes from Javanese.



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Other species

Worldwide there are more than 1100 species of SYZYGIUM, with the greatest diversity found between Malaysia and Australia—not to mention likely additional species which haven't even been described yet. In light of such factors, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive guide to this 'large, difficult genus.' Given the near certainty that you will come across other species, some of the clues which may help you determine that a tree is a SYZYGIUM species (or not, as the case may be) are the following characteristics:

- leaves are opposite;
- flowers occur in loose, branching clusters;
- stamens are numerous;
- fruits are succulent (tender, juicy), often 'crowned' at the apex (tip) by the persistent calyx;
- fruits are usually one-seeded (rarely two or more), the seed relatively large in relation to the fruit.

Following usage in Australia, an unidentified SYZYGIUM species could be referred to in English as a 'brush cherry' or a 'lilly pilly,' and in Indonesian possibly as a *jambu hutan*.

In at least one case, the Indonesian term *jambu* is applied to a minor tree of Sumatra, namely DIOSPYROS DIEPENHORSTII Miq., which according to some sources is known as *jambu dipo*. In actuality, this tree is a kind of persimmon, and it should be noted that persimmons differ on a number of the above-given characteristics. For example persimmon leaves are alternate, stamens are not prominent, and if the fleshy, gummy or leathery fruit is crowned with a persistent calyx, it will always be at the stem end not at the apex. Having said that much, I herewith leave persimmons and the related ebonies to a later treatment.

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