



Durian

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Name: *Durio zibethinus* (Bombacaceae).

Common Name: Durian.

Origin: Native to Southeast Asia.

Distribution: Durian is the most lucrative fruit grown in Southeast Asia. The main producers are Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Australian Distribution: There are plantings in north Queensland (from Tully 18°S to Cape Tribulation 16°S) and primarily around Darwin in the Northern Territory (12.5°S)

Preferred Climate and Soil Type: Durian thrives in a hot (minimum 23°C, maximum 33°C), humid, high rainfall (2-3000 mm) tropical environment. The main environmental constraint is the duration of the cold temperature and low relative humidity.

Durian prefer deep, well-drained fertile soils which are rich in both nutrients and organic matter.

Description: In tropical forests durian trees can reach heights of between 27-40 m, however, in commercial orchard situations heights are usually maintained between 18-20 m. Durian usually has a stout, straight trunk (once mature) and an irregular dense or open crown of branches up the length of the tree. Flowers are borne in clusters on the trunk and the branches.

Durian fruit is ovoid or round in shape and approximately 15-30 cm long and 12-15 cm wide. It can weigh up to 8 kg. The yellowish-green rind is thick, tough and covered with stout, sharply pointed spines and handling without gloves can be painful.

Varieties: Approximately 40 durian clones have been introduced into the NT with the different varieties suited to different localities. The varieties predominantly grown in the NT are Gun Pun, Mon Thong and Gob.

Culture: Durian exhibit signs of clonal self incompatibility and therefore outcrossing is recommended. It is recommended to have a mixed clonal stand with different clones in separate rows and a mixed planting of early, late and medium flowering clones to extend and enhances productivity.

Common planting distance is usually 10-12 x 10-12 m square or triangular planting system although some plantings of 10x8 m are known. Permanent natural wind breaks are also a requirement. Durian trees, when first planted into the field, require shading for the first two years. Trees should also be mounded and mulched to protect them against Phytophthora disease.

Pests and Disease: The most serious pest of durian in both Queensland and the Northern Territory is the fruit-spotting bug which attacks both flowers and developing fruit. Green ants and meat ants are also a problem.

Phytophthora disease is the most serious disease affecting durian at all stages of tree growth, causing dieback, root rot, patch canker and pre and post harvest fruit rots.

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Fruiting Season: In the Northern Territory durian fruits between November and February while in Queensland the fruiting season is between January and April.

Harvesting: Ripe fruit falls from the tree. Most commercial growers either tie the fruit to the tree or use nets or tarpaulins erected below the tree to prevent fruit damage. Fruit can also be cut down before it is fully ripe but selective harvesting requires a great deal of skill and experience.

Storage Conditions: Damaged durian fruit has a very short shelf-life of around 2-3 days. The shelf-life of intact fruit can be extended to one week if kept at 5-10°C. Selective harvesting before the fruit is ripe can increase shelf-life by three weeks if stored at around 15°C.

Culinary Uses: The flesh is mostly eaten fresh, but it is best after it is chilled. Durian is also a popular flavouring for ice-cream. Durian flesh can be canned and dried.