

The Jaboticaba¹

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- **Scientific Name:** *Myrciaria cauliflora* Berg.
- **Family:** Myrtaceae
- **Origin:** Brazil
- **Distribution:** Extensively grown in Brazil and widely planted in South Florida.

DESCRIPTION

Tree. Small, bushy tree or large shrub with fine-textured evergreen foliage and multicolored bark. It grows very slowly in South Florida, seldom exceeding a height of 15 feet. However, the tree may grow to considerable size in the deep, fertile soil of its native habitat in Brazil, often exceeding 30 feet in height.

Leaves. Lanceolate to elliptic, 1 to 2 inches in length, dark green and somewhat leathery.

Flowers. Small, white flowers produced in profusion, singly or in clusters, directly on the bark,

all along the trunk, limbs and larger branches several times a year.

Fruit. Grapelike in appearance but with a thicker and tougher dark maroon-purple, almost black skin. The fruit is produced directly upon the trunk and larger branches, singly or in clusters from the ground up. It averages about 1 inch in diameter, varying in size from 1/2 to 1 1/4 inches. The whitish, gelatinous pulp contains 1 to 4 seeds and has a pleasant, subacid, grapelike flavor. The skin has a slightly turpentine flavor that is not objectionable.

Season. The tree blooms several times per year and, with only 20 to 30 days from bloom to harvest, there may be 5 to 6 crops per year.

Production. The tree usually does not bear fruit within 8 or more years, but it may fruit in less time under particularly favorable conditions.

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PROPAGATION

Propagation is usually by seed since most are polyembryonic with seedlings coming "true from seed." The seeds germinate in about 1 month. A suitable potting mixture to use consists of 2 parts peat, 1 part coarse sand and 1 part coarse perlite, wood shavings or compost. Veneer or side grafts may be used to reproduce superior selections but grafting is usually difficult.

CLIMATE

Mature jaboticaba trees will tolerate minimums of 27 to 29°F (-2 to 3°C) for 2 or 3 hours if they are in good condition. However, young trees may be severely injured at those temperatures and require protection by sprinklers or supplemental heat. The tree requires full sunlight for good growth and fruiting.

SOILS

The jaboticaba grows and fruits best when grown in a rich, deep soil with a slightly acid pH. Although it is not well adapted to alkaline soils, it may be grown successfully by thinly mulching and applying necessary nutrients. The tree is not tolerant to salts, flooding, and drought.

PLANTING

The tree should be planted where it will receive full sun. Its crown (uppermost) roots should be 2 to 3 inches higher than surrounding soil levels to provide for water run-off. Peat, compost or rotted manure may be mixed with the soil from the planting hole to improve it. It must be a well aerated mixture. Water should be applied as needed around the newly set tree to maintain good moisture conditions. Constant wet soil or flooding is undesirable.

FERTILIZATION

The tree needs an adequate supply of nutrients at all times for it to grow and fruit well. Newly planted trees should be fertilized with 1-1-1- 1/2 (N, P, K, Mg) ratio fertilizer, such as 6-6-6-3 w/MgO, 8-8-8-4 w/MgO, or 10-10-10-5 w/MgO, for the first year or

two. If proper soil moisture is maintained, the trees should be fertilized at monthly intervals the first year, every 2 months during the second year, every 3 months in the third year and annually thereafter. Beginning in the third year, the fertilizer ratio may be changed to 4-1-5-2.5, such as an analysis of 8-2-10-5 or a similar analysis of 8-3-9-5. Complete nutritional sprays containing boron, copper, manganese and zinc should be applied 3 times a year to the foliage of trees growing in alkaline soils. Iron should be applied as a chelate by drenching it into the soil.

IRRIGATION

Water should be supplied only as needed to maintain good soil moisture and to prevent wilting. Irrigation is usually required when the upper 1 to 2 inches of soil has dried.

PRUNING

Little or no pruning is usually necessary. Some may be done to remove dead wood or broken branches, shape the tree or prevent crowding.

PESTS AND DISEASES

There are no serious pests or diseases of jaboticaba in Florida.

USES

The mature jaboticaba tree produces an abundance of delicious fruit throughout most of the year. This fruit can be eaten fresh or be made into jellies, jams, or wine. Both fruit and juice are well preserved by freezing. The jaboticaba is a very attractive plant with good landscape value. It is well worth planting more extensively.