

*Myrciaria cauliflora*

Jaboticaba; Brazilian grapetree; jaboticaba; ybapuru

**Family:** Myrtaceae



S.H. Brown

Jaboticaba with fruits on bark. Mid-November, Honduras

**Jaboticaba**

**Synonyms (Discarded Names):** *Eugenia cauliflora*; *Myrtus cauliflora*; *Plinia cauliflora*

**Origin:** Southern Brazil

**U.S.D.A. Zone:** 9b-11 (Minimum 27°F)

**Growth Rate:** Slow

**Light Requirements:** Medium; high

**Flower Characteristics:** Insignificant

**Flowering Months:** Intermittently year-round

**Leaf Persistence:** Evergreen

**Salt Tolerance:** Low

**Drought Tolerance:** Medium

**Soil Requirement:** Wide

**Nutritional Requirements:** Medium

**Potential Pests:** Aphids; scales; nematodes; spider mites

**Typical Dimensions:** 15 to 30 feet high by 18 to 12 feet wide.

**Propagation:** Seeds; grafting; air layering; root cuttings

**Human hazards:** None

**Common Uses:** Edible fruit; small tree; shrub; hedge; bonsai



S.H. Brown

Fruits on limb. Late March, Pine Island, FL.

### Geographic Distribution

The jaboticaba is native to the coastal forests and hilly regions of southern Brazil. It is also present in adjacent countries of Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, and northern Argentina. Under native conditions, jaboticaba is frequently inundated for several weeks without serious damage, so it is considered water-tolerant. The tree is well adapted for growth in South Florida and produces profusely and repeatedly at maturity. Despite its tremendous potential as a dooryard crop, it is rarely seen in Florida gardens.

### Growth Habit

Jaboticaba is a large shrub, or small evergreen tree. The tree is normally singled-trunk and low branching. However, it is not unusual for specimens to have multiple trunks. The branches are profuse, angling upward and typically forms a dense, rounded or vase-like, symmetrical crown. The bark is reddish brown, peeling to reveal a smooth, multicolored cream to gray underbark similar to guava.

### Leaf, Flower, Fruit and Reproduction

The leaf is entire, simple, opposite, lanceolate to elliptic, 1 to 4 inches long and 0.5 to 0.75 inches wide. It is salmon-colored when young and dark green when mature. Its flowers are small, staminate, white or near-white and cauliflorous, meaning they grow directly on the bark or underbark along the trunk, limbs and branches. This occurs several times a year primarily in late winter and spring. The fruit is a berry. Fruits are not produced on new growth as is common on many other tropical fruit trees. Globular,



S.H. Brown

The underbark is smooth and multi-colored. Notice the 2 fruits on the branch.



Eight young salmon-colored leaves.



Bronwyn Mason

A profusion of white flowers on the branches. Mid-March, Fort Myers, FL



Bronwyn Mason

The branches are loaded with various stages of maturing fruits. Mid-March, Fort Myers, FL



Bronwyn Mason

Four fruits in hand. Mid-March, Fort Myers, FL

grape-like fruit is produced singly or in dense clusters from the ground up. Immature fruit is green and becomes dark maroon-purple to almost black when ripe. Fruit development is vary rapid, usually 20 to 25 days from flower to full maturity. It is typically 1 inch in diameter, varying from 1/2 to 1 1/4 inches. The edible berry contains a whitish, gelatinous pulp with 1 to 5 ovoid flattened seeds, with a resinous quality that is either delectable or quite disagreeable, depending upon personal taste. The skin is often likened to the thick-skinned Muscadine grape and has a slightly turpentine flavor. The fruit is eaten fresh or made into jams and jellies, or used to make wine.

Jaboticaba is commonly produced from seeds which take about 30 days to germinate. Rooted cuttings and air-layering are other successful methods of propagation.



Bronwyn Mason

The fruit has a whitish, gelatinous pulp and contains 1 to 5 seeds.



S.H. Brown

A 20 year old tree being picked for its fruit.  
Late March, Pine Island, FL



S.H. Brown

Two low-branching and trimmed jaboticaba trees growing on the campus of Zamorano Pan-American Agricultural School, Honduras

## **Planting, Maintenance and Harvesting Guidelines**

Jaboticaba makes a fine landscape shrub, tree or hedge. It can be grown as a patio or courtyard tree and is adapted to large container growing. In the garden, plant trees 15 to 20 feet apart where they will receive full sun or light shade. The jaboticaba prefers moist, slightly acidic sandy soils for best growth. It is widely adaptable and can grow on alkaline beach-sand soils as long as it is tended and irrigated. Plant the tree in soil without backfilling the hole with organic matter. Mulch the soil around the tree a foot or two beyond the expanding roots. Keep the mulched area free of grass and weeds. Trees transplant well from containers but they may take up to two years to become established. Establishment requires ample irrigation, perhaps 3 to 4 times a week. Once established, irrigate the tree only as needed to maintain good soil moisture or to prevent wilting. Jaboticaba grows very slow in South Florida, seldom exceeding 16 feet. It may grow to 30 feet in deep fertile soil as it does in its native Brazil. Little or no pruning is necessary. Some may be done to remove dead wood or broken branches, shape the tree or to prevent crowding. Mature jaboticaba trees will tolerate minimum temperatures of 27 to 29°F for 2 to 3 hours if they are in good condition. However, young trees may be severely injured at those temperatures.

In high pH soils, some special attention may be required to provide the proper nutrition. Fertilize it three times a year with a complete fertilizer. Chelated iron can be applied to correct iron deficiency. Be sure other micronutrients are part of the fertilizer mix. Jaboticaba is not tolerant of salt. A report from one grower indicates damage to jaboticaba using well or reclaimed water containing 600 ppm or more of total dissolved salts. Many Extension Offices and the Soil Laboratory at the University of Florida, Gainesville, are able to test your water for salinity. [Click here](#) for more on the salt tolerance of various tropical fruit trees.

Jaboticaba may take as many as eight years to bear fruit. Fruit production may occur throughout the year but the heaviest bearing is in late March and April with hundreds of fruit on a large tree. A mature tree may produce 100 pounds of fruit over the course of a season. Yield is not always reliable and may vary from year to year. The fruit should be harvested a few days after maturity. The fruit spoils at room temperature in about two days.

The plant is not often bothered by pests. Aphids, scales, nematodes and spider mites are minor, occasional problems.

## **References**

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Phillips, R. and Goldweber, S. 2005. The Jaboticaba. Publication #HS39. University of Florida, Gainesville, FL <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mg335>

Watkins, J., Sheehan, T. and Black, R. 1973. Florida Landscape Plants: Native and Exotic. University Press of Florida, Gainesville, FL

## **Jaboticaba Source**

[Treehouse Nursery](#), Pine Island, FL

This fact sheet was reviewed by Peggy Cruz, Lee County Extension; Cathy Feser, Collier County, and Steve Curcuro, [Treehouse Nursery](#), Bokeelia, FL

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