Mango

Department of Agriculture, Western Australia
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Mango

The mango is one of the most flavoursome of all tropical fruits. It has gained such popularity on Western Australian markets that commercial orchards have been established from Carnarvon to Kununurra.

Small areas have been planted just north of Perth, but their viability is yet unproven.

When local supplies are not available, traders import mangoes from Queensland, South Africa, India, Mexico and the Philippines.

Sometimes called the “king of fruits”, the mango has been cultivated for more than 4000 years. It originated in the tropics, from the Indian/Burmese border, and will grow in temperate areas, provided they are not subject to prolonged frost periods.

Today, nearly every part of the fruit is used. It can be eaten fresh, frozen, dehydrated, canned and made into jellies, jams, chutneys, pickles, juice and iced confectionery. Even the seed is sometimes used as a crude flour and the leaves and seed as stock fodder.

Commercial potential

Commercially there is potential in Western Australia for developing a mango industry to supply the domestic market from October to April.

Export markets are available in South-East Asia and the Middle East to absorb any oversupply, particularly during peak production at Carnarvon during January.

However, with proper promotion Western Australian consumers will become increasingly aware of mangoes and much bigger domestic sales must result.
Growth details
The mango tree (*Mangifera indica* L.) is hardy, spreading, dense-foliaged and evergreen. It belongs to the Anacardiaceae family. Some varieties grow to 20 metres tall with a canopy 15 metres wide. Most trees in temperate areas grow no taller than about six metres with a canopy width of five metres. The trees can live for more than 100 years in favourable conditions.

Mangoes will grow in a wide range of soil types. They are very drought tolerant but require plenty of soil moisture for optimum production.

The scented flowers are borne on large greenish-white panicles and make an impressive sight. In fact their value as a flowering garden plant is underestimated.

The fruits vary in shape from spherical to oblong to ovoid and weigh from 200 to 1000 grams. Their skin varies from dark green to yellow to red. The flesh is orange to yellow with a distinctive aroma and flavour.

The common variety originally cultivated in Western Australia has a slight "turpentine" flavour, and the fibrous flesh and strong flavour can make this variety unacceptable to the European palate. The superior commercial varieties such as Kensington Pride contain little or no fibre in the flesh, have a more pleasant aroma and better flavour.

The large, flattened, kidney-shaped seed can be either poly-embryonic, having several embryos, or mono-embryonic, having only one embryo. Poly-embryonic varieties such as Kensington Pride usually do not require grafting, while mono-embryonic types are hybrids which do not grow true to type and should be grafted. Sometimes it may be an advantage to graft poly-embryonic varieties as this produces a small, spreading tree and gives earlier fruit production.

The Department of Agriculture is testing a number of potentially useful varieties, many of which are mono-embryonic. However, it is too early to make varietal recommendations.