

# Bel Fruit

*Aegle marmelos* Correa

Common names	Bengal quince, Indian quince, golden apple, holy fruit, stone apple, bel, bela, sirphal, maredoo, matum, mapin, pnoi, bau nau, maja, pokok maja batu, modjo, oranger du malabar, marmelos.
Origin	Back to 800 B.C., it was cultivated throughout India, mainly in temple gardens, because of its status as a sacred tree. Also cultivated in Ceylon and northern Malaya, the drier areas of Java, and to a limited extent on northern Luzon in the Philippine Islands. It belongs to Rutaceae family, the family of citrus fruits.
Description	The bael fruit tree is slow growing, of medium size, up to 40 or 50 ft (12-15m) tall with short trunk, thick, soft, flaking bark, and spreading, sometimes spiny branches, the lower ones of drooping. A clear, gummy sap, resembling gum Arabic, exudes from wounded branches and hangs down in long strands, becoming gradually solid. It is sweet at first taste and then irritating to the throat.
Growth Habitat	The bael fruit tree is a subtropical species. It is tolerant of waterlogging and has an unusually wide temperature tolerance (from -7 degree Celcius to 48 degree Celcius). It requires a pronounced dry season to give fruit.
Foliage	The deciduous, alternate leaves, borne singly or in 2's or 3's, are composed of 3 to 5 oval, pointed, shallowly toothed leaflets. New foliage is glossy and pinkish-maroon. Mature leaves emit a disagreeable odor when bruised.
Flowers	Bael flowers are fragrant, they are formed in clusters of 4 to 7 along the young branchlets. They have 4 recurved, fleshy petals, green outside, yellowish inside, and 50 or more greenish-yellow stamens.

Fruits	The woody - skinned fruit of bael has a smooth surface and measures 5 to 15 cm in diameter. Some fruits are so hard that you need a hammer to break the skin. The fruits contain many seeds, covered with fibrous hairs and are surrounded by a thick, sticky pulp.
Soil	The bael fruit is said to do best on rich, well-drained soil, but it has grown well and fruited on the oolitic limestone of southern Florida. It grows well in swampy, alkaline or stony soils and grows luxuriantly in the soils having pH range of 5 to 8.
Pruning	Pruning is done twice in a year, once in May and another in August. Pruning is limited to the removal of dead and diseased twigs, branches in May while in August healthy leaves are pruned for sale.
Fertilization	The bael plant produces a number of fruits, hence application of manures and fertilization is beneficial. The deficiency of nitrogen and zinc is common in Bael trees and can be corrected by soil application or foliar spray.
Propagation	The bael fruit is commonly grown from seed in nurseries and transplanted into the field. Occasionally, air-layers or root cuttings have been used for propagation.
Harvest	Normally, the fruit is harvested when yellowish-green and kept for 8 days while it loses its green tint. Then the stem readily separated from the fruit. Care is needed in harvesting and handling to avoid causing cracks in the rind.
Nutritional Properties	100 grams of bael fruit pulp contains 31 grams of carbohydrate and 2 grams of protein, which adds up to nearly 140 calories. The ripe fruit is rich in beta-carotene, a precursor of Vitamin A, it also contains significant quantities of the B vitamins thiamine and riboflavin, and small amounts of Vitamin C.

<p>Health Benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bael has a high tannin content which makes it an effective cure for dysentery and cholera. There is as much as 9% tannin in the pulp of wild fruits, less in the cultivated types. The rind contains up to 20%. The leaves also contain tannin.</li> <li>• Bael is beneficial in the digestive system and it is also a mild laxative.</li> <li>• A decoction of the unripe fruit with ginger and fennel is said to be effective for the treatment of hemorrhoids.</li> <li>• The juice of its leaves mixed with honey, can relieve catarrh and fever.</li> <li>• The pulp is used in the treatment of Vitiligo.</li> <li>• The bael leaf decoction is said to alleviate asthma.</li> <li>• A hot poultice of the leaves is considered an effective treatment for various inflammations.</li> <li>• Bael bark decoction is administered in cases of malaria.</li> <li>• The fruit, roots and leaves have antibiotic activity.</li> <li>• Bael root, leaves and bark are used in treating snakebite.</li> <li>• An infusion from bael leaves is an effective remedy for peptic ulcer.</li> <li>• Regular consumption of bael fruit will keep kidneys clean.</li> </ul>
<p>Commercial Uses</p>	<p>The scooped-out pulp from its fruits is eaten raw with or without sugar. It is also used in chutneys and for making jellies and jam. The fruit pulp has detergent action and has been used for washing clothes. The gum enveloping the seeds is commonly used as a household glue and is employed as an adhesive by jewelers. The rind of the unripe fruit is employed in tanning and also yields a yellow dye for calico and silk fabrics. Cologne is obtained from the flower and a decoction made from the flowers is used as eye lotion. The wood of the tree is used for the small size turnery, tools and knife handles, pestles and comb.</p>

Food Suggestion

**Bael Fruit Ice Tea**

Ingredients:

Few dried bael fruit slices

4 cups water

3 tbsp sugar

Preparation:

1. Boil water in the medium pot.
2. Add dried bael fruit slices and let it boil for few minutes.
3. Add sugar and stir until dissolved.
4. Remove from heat and let it cool.
5. Serve chilled with some ice.