

Bilimbi

Averrhoa bilimbi



Common names	Belimbing, Bilimbing Asam, Belimbing Buluh, Balimbing, Cucumber Tree, Tree Sorrel
Origin	Possibly originating from Moluccas and Indonesia. The species is cultivated or found semi-wild throughout Indonesia, Philippines, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar (Burma) and Malaysia. It belongs to Oxalidaceae family.
Description	The fruit is a faint, five cylindrically shaped fruit about 4 - 10cm long. There are green and yellow species. Taste very sour when ripe.
Growth Habitat	The belimbing buluh is a tropical species, more sensitive to cold than the starfruit, especially when very young. Ideally, with regular rainfall throughout most of the year but there should be a 2- to 3-month dry season. The tree grows slowly in shady or semi-shady situations. Prefers direct sunlight.
Foliage	The tree is about 5-10m with a short trunk dividing into a number of upright branches. The leaves which cluster at the branch tips have a rounded base and pointed tip, 2-10cm long and 1.2 - 2.2cm wide. Medium green on top and pale

	green underneath.
Flowers	Small, fragrant, 5-petalled flowers, yellowish-green or purplish marked with dark-purple, are borne in small, hairy panicles emerging directly from the trunk and oldest, thickest branches and some twigs, as do the clusters of small, longish fruits.
Fruits	Longish, cylindrical, about 4-10cm long. The fruit is crisp unripe. The outer skin is glossy, very thin. The flesh is green or yellow, juicy and very acidic with tiny flattened, disk-like seeds.
Soil	While it does best in rich, moist, but well-drained soil, it grows and fruits quite well on sand or limestone.
Pruning	Flowers and fruit grow from established branches or tree trunk so avoid pruning too much.
Fertilization	At the beginning, use dried manure. Then, once every six months, 5kg of manure per tree, spreading from the plant base to 50cm from the tip of the branches.
Propagation	Usually propagated by seed, although air layering and grafting have been successful. Grafting belimbing buluh onto carambola rootstock (and vice versa) is possible. Topworking trees is also possible.
Harvest	Fruit is picked by hand, either individually or in clusters, when it starts to turn to a lighter green. It is very soft-skinned and should be handled with care. In the field fruits should not be piled more than a few inches on top of one another in the harvest containers. Last 7-8 days if fruit is chilled in the field at time of harvest. Can be dried or frozen for future use.
Nutritional Properties	Belimbing buluh are fairly high in ascorbic acid or Vitamin C, phosphorus and calcium. It has a pH of 4.47. It contains

	oxalic acid which is much stronger than vinegar.
Health Benefits	Dietary foods rich in flavonoids are associated with reduced risk of death due to coronary heart disease and cardiovascular disease. Flavonoid Luteolin (202mg/kg) and Flavonoid Apigenin (458mg/kg) can be found in the fruit and leaves(464mg/kg).
Commercial Uses	In the Philippines, the leaves serve as a paste on itches, swelling, rheumatism, mumps or skin eruptions. Elsewhere, they are used for bites of poisonous creatures. A leaf infusion is used as an after-birth tonic, while the flower infusion is used for thrush, cold, and cough. Malaysians use fermented or fresh bilimbi leaves to treat venereal diseases. In French Guiana, syrup made from the fruit is used to treat inflammatory conditions. To date there is no scientific evidence to confirm effectiveness for such uses. In some villages in India, the fruit was used in folk medicine to control obesity. This led to further studies on its antihyperlipidemic properties. The fruits are used as pickles, curries preserves and drinks.
Food Suggestion	<p>Chilli Belimbi Relish Recipe</p> <p><u>Ingredients:-</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20gm / 20 whole dried chillies • 2gm / $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp belacan (shrimp paste) • 8gm / 3 medium cloves garlic • 50ml / $\frac{1}{4}$ cup tamarind juice • 3gm / 1cm piece fresh turmeric • 90ml / 2 tbsp oil • 3gm / $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt • 250gm / 2 medium onions (1 for frying) • 5 belimbi, sliced • 24gm / 2 tbsp sugar • 2cm ginger

Method:-

- 1) Soak dried chillies in water for one hour. Drain and wash.
 - 2) Blend chillies with all ingredients except one onion and bilimbi.
 - 3) Heat oil in saucepan.
 - 4) Fry one chopped onion till soft.
 - 5) Pour in blended ingredients.
 - 6) Cook for about 20 minutes over a slow fire.
 - 7) Add salt, 2 tbsp water, tamarind juice and sugar.
 - 8) Add bilimbi and cook for 10 minutes.
- Serve with rice or as a dipping sauce.