

Common Name: **Cherry, Sour**

Genus: *Prunus*

Species: *cerasus*

Family: Rosaceae

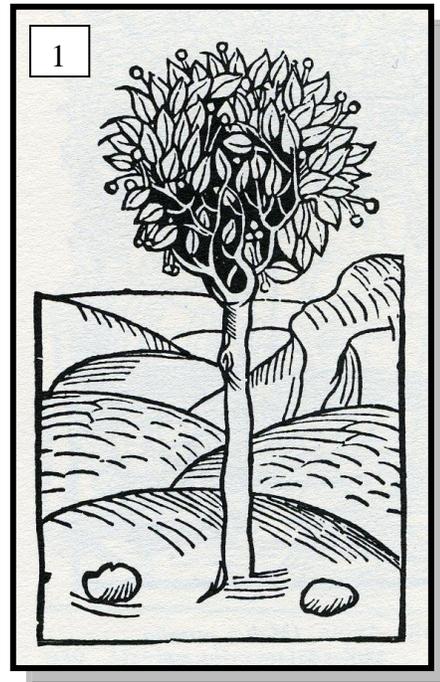
AKA: Chiryse, Cheseberien/Chiseberien



## Historical Uses:

**Medical:** “Cerasia, if they be taken while they are new, are good for the belly, but being dried they will stop the belly. But the gumme of the Cerasia, heales an old Cough, if it be taken with diluted wine, & it causeth a good color and sharpness of sight & appetite. And being dranck with wine, it is good for such as are troubled with the stone.” (1)

“The best and principall Cherries be those that are somewhat sower: those little sweet ones which be wilde and soonest ripe be the worst: they containe bad juice, they very soon putrifie, and do ingender ill bloud, by reason whereof they do not onely breed worms in the belly, but troublesome agues, and often pestilent fevers: and therefore in well governed common wealths it is carefully provided, that they should not be sold in the markets and the plague time. Spanish cherries are like to these in faculties, but they do not so soon putrifie: they be likewise cold, and the juice they make is not good. The Flanders or Kentish cherries that are through ripe, have a better juice but watery, cold and moist: they quench thirst, they are good for an hot stomacke, and profitable for those that have the ague: they easily descend and make the body soluble: they nourish nothing at all.” “The common blacke Cherries do strengthen the stomack, and are wholesomer then the red Cherries, the which being dried do stop the laske.” “The gum of the Cherrie tree taken with wine and water, is reported to help the stone; it may do good by making the passages slippery, and by tempering & allaying the sharpnesse of the humors; and in this manner it is a remedy also for an old cough.” (2)



With vinegar it dries up phlegm and other superfluities of the stomach. It is good for that organ when fresh, but stops it up when dry. The gum, taken in wine, eases rough, dry lungs and expels kidney and bladder stones. The fruits, when eaten, restrain fluxes of the



Cherry tree in Medieval Garden.

intestines, strengthen the stomach, sharpen the sight and appetite, and give the body and face a good color.” (3)

**Culinary:** “Many excellent tarts and other pleasant meats are made with cherries, sugar, and other delicacies, whereof to write were to small purpose.” (4)

**Folklore/Astrology:** “Generally all the kindes of cherries are cold and moist of temperature, although some more cold and moist and others: of which being eaten before meat doe soften the belly very gently, they are unwholesome either unto moist and rheumaticke bodies, or the unhealthie and cold stomackes.” (5)

“Cold and dry in the second degree, the tree and its fruits belong to Venus. They are the fruits of paradise and symbolize the delights of the blessed, whose character is sweet because

of their good works. Old cherry trees however were the abode of harmful demons; the shadows of the trees were evil, capable of causing painful swellings of the hands and feet. In England, cherries were an indicator of good luck.” (6)

**Other:** Note: In his herbal, Gerard shows images for ten different cherry trees.

### Contemporary Uses:

**Parts Used:** Floral peduncles, fresh and dry fruit

**Medicinal:** “Diuretic: it stimulates urine elimination, very useful in those cases in which it is necessary to stimulate the kidneys to increase micturition, in illnesses like obesity, cellulite, dropsy, edema, kidney pain, nephritis, renal insufficiency, swollen eyes, etc.” Can be used internally or externally. For external applications it can be used to treat skin diseases “the preparation of slighter decoctions exercise is a healing power on the skin, to get rid of pimples, acne and other skin disorders and favouring the wound scarring.” (7)



Cherries ripening in the Medieval Garden

**Culinary:** Used for food; can be eaten raw or in pies, jams, tarts, or used to make wine or liqueurs. Also used in soups and pork dishes.

**Economic:** Can be used as a veneer and also for small, fine construction projects. “An edible oil obtained from the seed is also used in cosmetics. The gum obtained from the stem is also used as an adhesive. A green dye can be obtained from the leaves. A dark gray to green dye can be obtained from the fruit.” (8)

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**Area of Origin:** Asia Minor (Between Black and Caspian Seas, Turkey/Iran)

**Physical description:** Small tree with twiggy branches, fruit borne on short stalks, leaves are simple and usually lanceolate, unlobed and toothed along the margin.

**Plant type:** Deciduous tree

**Form:** Upright, spreading

**Height:** To 30 feet

**Flower color:** Varies, white to pink

**Flowering period:** Early to mid spring

**Soil type/requirements:** Deep, well-drained loamy soil. Does not tolerate wet soils.

**pH:** Between 6 and 7

**Fruit:** Edible fleshy drupe

**Hardiness zone:** USDA zone 5-7 (sweet), zone 4-6 (sour)

**Sun requirements:** Full sun

**Propagation:** Can be grown from seed however grafting is much more common

**Cautions:** Susceptible to tent caterpillars, rot, spot and knot diseases, blight, canker, powdery mildew, birds eating crop.

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## **Sources**

1. Dioscorides, book 1, plant 157
2. Gerard, page 1506- 1507
3. Anderson, page 253
4. Gerard, page 1506-1507
5. Ibid
6. Anderson, page 253
7. Botanical Online: <http://www.botanical-online.com/medicinalsprunusaviumangles.htm>
8. Plants for a Future:  
<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Prunus+cerasus>

## **Illustrations/Images:**

1. Drachs Herbal 1490-95
2. PSUMG 2017
3. PSUMG 2017