

Common Name: **Medlar Tree**

Genus: *Mespilus*

Species: *species*

Family: Rosaceae

AKA:



Historical Uses:

Medical: “The stones or kernels of the Medlars, made into powder and drunke, doe breake the stone, expel gravell, and procure urine.”
“Moreover, they are singular good for women with childe: for they strengthen the stomache , and stay the loathsomenesse thereof(1)

“The decoction of them is good to gargle and wash the mouth, throat, and teeth: when there is any defluxion of blood to stay it, or of humours, which causeth the pains and swellings...If a poultice or plaister be made with dried medlars, beaten and mixed with the juice of red roses, whereunto a few cloves and nutmegs may be added, and a little red coral also, and applied to the stomach that is given to casting or lathing of meat, it effectually helpeth. The dried leaves in powder strewed on fresh bleeding wounds, restraineth the blood, and healeth up the wound quickly.” (2)



Culinary: “Medlars do stop the belly, especially when they be greene and hard, for after that they have been kept a while, so that they become soft and tender, they doe not binde or stop so much, but are then more fit to be eaten. The fruit of the three grain Medlar, is eaten both raw and boiled, and is more wholesome for the stomacke. These Medlars be oftentimes preferued with sugar or hony: and being so prepared, they are pleasant and delightfull to the taste.”(3)

Folklore/Astrology: “The fruit is old *Saturn*’s, and sure a better medicine be hardly hath to strengthen the retentive faculty; therefore it stays a women’s longings: The good old man cannot endure women’s minds should run a gadding.” (4)

“It is cold and dry in the third degree, and its fruits belong to Saturn.” (5)

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Fruit

Medicinal: None

Culinary: Can be used to make jellies, used in desserts, and for wine making. Fruit is not edible immediately after picking. It must be stored and over ripen before eating.

Economic: Not practical as an economic product

Other: May have been cultivated for as long as 3000 years. Introduced to Greece around 700 BC and to Rome about 200 BC. It was an important fruit plant during Roman and medieval times. By the 17th and 18th centuries, however, it had been superseded by other fruits, and is little cultivated today.(6)



Medlar tree in flower



Medlar fruit and flower

Area of Origin: Native to southeastern Europe and western Asia. Introduced into central Europe.

Physical description: Small, shrub like tree.

Plant type: Deciduous tree

Form: Upright spreading branching habit

Height: 15 to 20 feet (4.5m to 6m)

Flower color: White

Flowering period: Late spring early summer

Soil type/requirements: any fertile, moist soil

Fruit: Large, brown, fuzzy, similar in shape to a large rose hip. Must go through over-ripening in order to be edible.

Hardiness zone: USDA zone 5-9

Sun requirements: Full sun

Propagation: Grafted or budded on quince rootstock

Sources

1. Gerard, p. 1453-1455
2. Culpepper, p. 92-93
3. Gerard, p. 1453-1455
4. Culpepper, p. 92-93
5. Anderson, p.196-197

6. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mespilus_germanica

Illustrations/Images:

1. Gerard's Herbal 1633 ed.
2. <http://www.leereich.com/2013/12/ugly-but-tasty-old-fruit.html>
3. <https://www.pomonafruits.co.uk/fruit-trees-bare-root/medlar-trees/medlar-tree-nottingham>