



Mulberry

Mulberry as a fresh and dry fruit for Afghans

Mulberry is cultivated and grown in all provinces of Afghanistan and has deep connections to Afghan culture. In some provinces, mulberry is a primary fruit crop, but often it is grown along field boundaries and road sides, etc.. Fresh and dried mulberries are famous in the Northern provinces, especially those along the highway from Kabul to Balkh. The provinces with the greatest commercial production are:

Parwan, Kapisa, Panjshir, Takhar, Samanghan, Kunar, Laghman, Badakhshan, Nimroz, Nuristan and Nangharhar. Mulberries are widely grown for both private and commercial purposes.



Commercial operations can vary from just a few trees to large orchards. There can also be a considerable use of the mulberry leaves for silkworms.

Why is mulberry important?

Dried mulberries are one of the most important dried fruits in Afghanistan, especially during holiday events. Mulberries are quite tolerant to drought and poor soil. Most mulberry varieties - especially white mulberry types - can grow in cold climates

Mulberry Culture

- **Location:** Mulberries need full sun and adequate space (plant at least 15ft or 4.57m apart)
- **Soil:** Mulberries like a warm, well-drained soil, preferably a deep loam. Shallow soils such as those frequently found on chalk or gravel are not recommended.
- **Irrigation:** Although somewhat drought-resistant, mulberries produce better when watered during dry periods. If the roots become too dry, the fruit may drop before being fully ripe.
- **Fertilization:** Mulberries generally thrive with minimal fertilization. In Afghanistan, farmers do not fertilize mulberry trees.
- **Pruning:** No special pruning techniques are needed after the branches have been trained to a sturdy framework (i.e., a set of main branches with laterals). Dead or overcrowded wood can be removed. Avoid making any cuts of branches greater than 5cm, as such branches tend not to heal well.
- **Harvest:** White and red mulberry fruits (and hybrid fruits) are ready for harvest in late spring. The fruit of black mulberries ripen in summer to late summer.
 - **White mulberries** are often harvested by spreading a sheet on the ground and shaking the limbs.
 - **Black mulberries** are more difficult to pick. The berries are squeezed to pull them loose, and tend to collapse, staining the hands (and clothing) with blood red juice.



Prepared by Hussain Sharifi and Mark Bell, January 2012.

Reference: California Rarer Fruit Growers <http://www.crfg.org/pubs/ff/mulberry.html>

For more information visit: www.ip.ucdavis.edu