

Flavours of Halgolla Plantation Home

This is a little collection of those plants and trees that grow in and around Halgolla Plantation Home (HPH) and what they produce which visitors will, both in and out of season, have the opportunity to sample in their many forms.



Ambarella (*Spondias dulcis*) lends itself to consumption as a kind of spiced “Elevenes salad,” as a dessert fruit and as a sweet preserve that can be used as a topping for ice cream. The HPH garden contains a couple of these trees to which the Flying Squirrels are particularly attracted, it seems!



We have several Avocado (*Persea americana*) trees in our garden and the ripe fruit lend themselves admirably to consumption as a dessert fruit, which is the “traditional” manner in which they are consumed in Sri Lanka. However, we can whip up a guacamole salad, too, if that’s your preference.



Billings (*Averrhoa bilimbi*) is probably the most acid fruit or vegetable in Sri Lankan cuisine. It’s used for its sour qualities in a mix with other vegetables in curries and makes (believe it or not!) a delightful and slightly tart jam as well

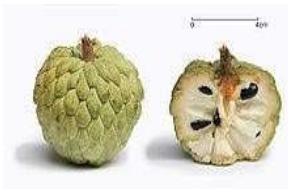
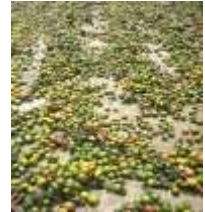


Breadfruit (*Artocarpus altilis*), is the plant that caused the Mutiny on the Bounty! It can be prepared in only a marginally smaller number of forms than its cousin, Jackfruit: as a great “white” (low condiment) curry or steamed or fried. Fried or roasted and spiced breadfruit chips make a great snack!



Tending Cloves (*Syzygium aromaticum*) on the drying floor at HPH. (The small dark-brown cluster at bottom left is coffee, though.) There are several clove trees immediately adjacent to HPH and even if the trees aren't producing at the time you visit, a crushed leaf will provide the familiar pungent scent that you may already be familiar with.

As advertised on our website, visitors to HPH are served home-grown coffee (*Coffea arabica*) - shown on the drying floor on the right - and if one happens to be visiting when the bushes are in bloom, the fragrance is something to experience!



Custard apple (*Annona squamosa*) has only made its comeback as a fruit in our garden recently. However, given the fact that Arlene is particularly fond of it, guests may rest assured that it WILL be protected from the depredations of the pests around us!



Both our Grapefruit (*Citrus x paradise*) trees bear well, particularly the older one and we have grapefruit available, in season, both as a part of breakfast and in its (very refreshing) liquid form.



While the little red "Chinese" Guava (*Psidium littorale var. longpies*) is an acquired taste in its fresh form, it makes Guava jelly without equal! We try to convert what fruit we can rescue from the birds into jelly for ourselves and our visitors.



Jackfruit (*Artocarpus heterophyllus*) is probably the most versatile and, certainly, the largest fruit of the tropics. It can be consumed in several forms, the very tender fruit **very**-slow-cooked in a clay pot on an open hearth for a uniquely-coloured and -flavoured vegetable curry. When mature, it is prepared in a variety of curried forms as an adjunct to a meal of rice and, when ripe, it makes a delightful dessert fruit. Jackfruit, in all its forms, must be tasted to

be believed!



We have one Jambu (*Syzygium aqueum*) tree in our home garden and this is a very pretty sight indeed when it is festooned with bright red fruits! In their fresh form they taste salty-sweet but make an excellent preserve which is used as a topping for other

desserts.



The water of the King Coconut (*Cocos nucifera*), on the left, is justifiably famed as probably the most refreshing drink for a hot tropical day. In addition, the soft pulp within the (immature) nut, when dressed with palm sugar (“jaggery”) provides a really wonderful sweet!



Several of our Orange (*Citrus sinensis*) trees are now bearing and, while the fruit (and juice) are not as sweet as that of their Mediterranean cousins, leave little to be desired in the matter of palatability. We also have a few Marmalade Orange trees, the peel of which makes excellent marmalade



The illustration on the left shows several dessert Plantains or Bananas (*Musa x*). These are but a small part of the varieties that are available in Sri Lanka and lend themselves to everything from the well-known dessert fruit to the “ash plantain” which is curried in various forms and is often available as a spiced chip at

HPH.

No account of edible plants and their produce would be complete without mention of the “plain jane” coconut trees in our garden and environs. Space does not permit of a documentation of the multiple uses of the fruit, fronds, husks and other parts of this virtual “tree of life.” That would take a whole encyclopedia!



“Kaffir lime” is a citrus variety (*Citrus hystrix*), the leaves of which are famed as a primary flavouring agent in Thai cuisine. Even though we live in different geographical and cultural circumstances, we value the crushed leaves of this tree - two of which grace our driveway - as indispensable additions, particularly to prawn and shrimp dishes.



Our supply of home-grown (Key) limes (*Citrus aurantiifolia*) does not yet fill our (copious) need for this source of (very necessary) acid in much of our tropical food and drink preparations. However, it shouldn't be long before we are self-sufficient in these juicy little fruits.



We have about a dozen large, bearing Mango (*Mangifera indica*) trees in the garden of HPH, the oldest probably a hundred years old! These belong to the Vellai Colomban, Karthu Colomban, Parrot and Ambalavi varieties, the fruit of each different from the other in appearance, size and flavor! As in the case of most

tropical fruit, a print description would not do them justice because “tasting is believing,” be it in stewed form, as a fresh fruit or as a wonderful drink.



Lovi (*Flacourtia inermis*), while visually a very attractive fruit, is acid in the extreme if eaten in its fresh form off the tree at the bottom of our garden! However, it does produce a jelly to which the word “superb” can justifiably be applied!



Mangosteen (*Garcinia mangostana*) is considered by many as the “King of Tropical Fruits” and with ample justification. There are two trees immediately adjacent to HPH itself and several in other parts of the plantation close to the Home. The flavor defies description and is not a taste that needs to be “cultivated.”



Nelli (*Phyllanthus acidus*) is famed for its extremely high Vitamin C content. While its flavor as a fresh fruit can be described as “indifferent,” it makes a truly excellent jam, a stock of which is usually available at HPH!



The various parts of Nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*) have a variety of uses. The nutmeg itself hardly needs introduction as a flavouring agent for a variety of foods, the (red) mace is a high value addition to cosmetics & pharmaceuticals, while the outer shell or husk provides the raw material for Nutmeg jelly which appears to be the favourite of the many fruit spreads that come out of Arlene’s HPH kitchen!



Our Ceylon Olive (*Elaeocarpus serratus*) tree bears profusely in season and apart from being consumed in their fresh form, the fruit is pickled and stuffed as an interesting addition to HPH’s cuisine.

Papaya or Papaw (*Carica papaya*) is probably the most ubiquitous dessert fruit in Sri Lanka and is generally available throughout the year. It is also presented in curried form, where it makes a unique addition to a traditional “rice and curry” meal.





Another fruit best known for its Mediterranean origins is Pomegranate (*Punica granatum*) of which we have a couple of trees which bear quite well, particularly after long spells of dry weather.



Black pepper (*Piper nigrum*) is a flavouring agent that everyone from every part of the world is familiar with. We not only grow enough of the vine to provide us (and our guests) with all the fresh, pungent black pepper we need but also to sell to the buyers of this and other spices.

Our Sapodilla (*Manilkara zapota*) tree is not in full bearing yet, but we have hopes that it'll catch up to our other fruit trees before too long and provide us with the delectable fruit which has a flavor reminiscent of cinnamon.



Soursop (*Annona muricata*) is another versatile dessert fruit, lending itself to a variety of presentations, inclusive of a very nice drink. Our only problem with this fruit is the competition for it with our avian and fourfooted neighbours!



Quite frankly, we don't rate Star Fruit (*Averrhoa carambola*) as highly as some do. However, our tree does provide pretty fair crops which make for a zesty and juicy fruit snack or drink from time to time (if we can save at least part of the crop from the monkeys and birds!)



Uguressa (*Flacourtia indica*), a cousin of Lovi, is usually consumed in its fresh form and then, too, the ripe fruit have to be gently squashed in order to divest them of their astringent quality. They then display a quite delectable flavour. We have two trees immediately adjacent to HPH that bear very well.

Those who've received copies of our HPH Newsletter at the beginning of 2013 will be familiar with this picture of the first vanilla (*Vanilla planifolia*) flower on our recently-planted vines. A. J. van der Poorten won a prize at the Paris Exposition of 1900 for this second most expensive (saffron takes first prize) spice in the world. So vanilla will simply be making a "comeback" at HPH under the care of the grand-son of the original prize-winner!

