

## REFERENCES

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4. Venter, F. & Venter, J-A. 1994. *Making the most of indigenous trees*. Pretoria
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# Num-num



## Further information can be obtained from:

Directorate: Plant Production.  
Address: Private Bag X 250, Pretoria, 0001,  
Tel: 012 319 6072  
Fax: 012 319 6372,  
e-mail: [DPP@daff.gov.za](mailto:DPP@daff.gov.za)

**Scientific name:** *Carissa macrocarpa*.  
**Family:** Apocynaceae  
**Common names:** Num-num, Noemnoem, Amatungula, Umbethankunzi and Ditokolo.



**agriculture,  
forestry & fisheries**

Department:  
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## **ORIGIN AND DISTRIBUTION**

Num-num is native to the coastal region of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. It is widely distributed from the southwestern part of Western Cape along the coastal areas through Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Free State, and Limpopo provinces. It also occurs in Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Botswana.

## **PRODUCTION AREAS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Num-num is found in the wild in the Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, North West, Eastern Cape, Western Cape and Free State provinces. Recently the tree is being planted as an ornamental.

## **DESCRIPTION**

Num-num is a dense, multi-stemmed fast growing shrub which grows up to 5m tall and 2 m wide. It is evergreen, twiggly and its branches are normally hairy.

## **BARK**

The bark is wrinkled, dark brown or grey in older trees, but younger stems, branchlets and twigs are green and fleshy. The stem and branches are often not visible through the leaves.

## **LEAVES**

The leaves are simple, short petiole, leathery, shiny dark green above and pale below. The leaves are egg-shaped, oval or almost round with short, thornlike tips and sharply pointed.

## **FLOWERS**

Flowers vary in size up to 35 mm in diameter. They are pure white and tinged pink, with a long slender corolla tube, sweetly scented and clustered at the tips of twigs.

## **FRUIT**

The fruit is small, ovoid, edible and red or purple in colour. The fruit skin is slightly milky with deciduous flavour.

## **CLIMATIC AND SOIL REQUIREMENTS**

### **Temperature**

The plant is not hard to cold and should be grown in frost-free areas; however, it is resistant to light frost. The young plant has to be protected from cold as a precautionary measure. It grows in semi-shade to full sun. The plant can withstand windy conditions.

## **Rainfall**

The num-num plant is drought resistant and needs moderate watering. It performs best under rainfall of about 200 mm (200 litres per square metre) per year.

## **Soil**

Num-num prefers light, well-drained soil with addition of plenty of compost.

## **CULTIVATION PRACTICES**

### **Propagation**

Num-num is propagated from seed, cuttings or layers.

### **Planting**

Plants should be spaced approximately 1 metre apart. Put seeds in flat seedling trays and cover with river sand rich in compost and water well. Transplant the seedlings into well-composted soil.

### **Fertilisation**

The plant should be occasionally fed with a balanced organic garden fertiliser in summer, for best results.

### **Pest control**

It is virtually pest free.

### **Diseases**

Num-num tends to be attacked by scale or fungus when planted in shady areas. It is always important to sterilise the soil beforehand in order to reduce the incidence of the disease.

### **Harvesting maturity**

The fruit should be harvested when fully ripe (with waxy skin that is bright crimson streaked with darker red).

## **USES**

Ripe fruit is edible, rich in vitamin C, calcium, magnesium and phosphorus. Fruit can be processed into jam and jellies. Num-num can be used as decorative plant in parking areas. It can also be used as borders and for protection because of its impenetrable hedges to both human and animals, especially when planted 1 m apart. The indigenous people even use its roots to treat toothache. Animals such as kudus browse on the leaves and young shoots, while some birds and monkeys feed on the fruit.