Soursop: The Plant, the Fruit and the Tea

From the teas.co.uk wiki

> **Soursop, in summary:** Soursop (Annona muricata) is the Caribbean tropical fruit tree producing prickly green fruit and tea-leaves; a cultural-tradition plant.

Last reviewed by the teas.co.uk team in March 2026.

Soursop (Annona muricata) is the tropical tree producing both the spiny green fruit eaten fresh and the dried leaves used for tea. Across Caribbean, Central American, and African diaspora cultures, soursop is one of the most respected household plants. Real if modest evidence for some claims; legitimate concerns about heavy long term consumption.

The plant

Soursop (*Annona muricata*) is native to Central America, the Caribbean, and northern South America. Now cultivated across the tropics, Caribbean, parts of Africa, Southeast Asia, parts of South America. The tree produces:

- **Fruit.** Large spiny green fruit; sweet tart white flesh inside. Eaten fresh, juiced, or used in desserts.
- **Leaves.** Dark green; dried for tea.
- **Roots and bark.** Used in some traditional medicine; not for general consumption.

The names

- **Soursop.** Caribbean and English speaking world.
- **Graviola.** Brazilian Portuguese; common in supplement marketing.
- **Guanábana.** Spanish speaking Latin America.
- **Brazilian pawpaw.** Older English usage.
- **Sirsak.** Indonesian.

The cultural traditions

Caribbean (Jamaica, Trinidad, others)

Soursop tea drunk for relaxation and blood pressure, and as a mild purifying tea. Treated as the household universal herb.

African (West and Central Africa)

Soursop has been cultivated and used medicinally across tropical Africa.

Central / South American

Indigenous medicine traditions across the soursop's native range.

Southeast Asian

Increasingly common in Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam.

The active compounds

- **Annonaceous acetogenins.** Compounds unique to the Annonaceae family. In vitro anti cancer activity. Theoretical neurological concerns at high doses.
- **Alkaloids (coreximine, anomuricine).** Mild sedative properties.
- **Polyphenols and flavonoids.** Antioxidant compounds.
- **Vitamin C.** Trace amounts in dried leaves.

The evidence base

Anti cancer claims (in vitro only)

Acetogenins kill various cancer cell types selectively in lab studies. NO human clinical evidence. Some websites push soursop as a cancer treatment, which is irresponsible. Anyone with a cancer diagnosis should follow oncologist advice, not herbal tea blogs.

Blood pressure (limited)

Some animal studies and preliminary human evidence for modest blood pressure lowering. Not a substitute for medication.

Mild sedative / tension easing (real)

Alkaloid contribution gives traditional reputation as a wind down evening tea.

Antioxidant (in vitro)

Some evidence; clinical translation uncertain.

The neurological concern

Studies in the French Caribbean (Guadeloupe specifically) found increased rates of atypical Parkinsonism in populations with high soursop consumption. Suggests heavy long term intake may carry neurological risk.

Practical implication: occasional/moderate consumption (1-3 cups weekly) is widely considered fine; heavy daily intake over years isn't traditional and isn't recommended.

What soursop tea tastes like

Earthy, slightly bitter, with a faint sweet finish. Less aggressive than cerassie (also Caribbean); more substantial than chamomile. With honey to sweeten and lime to brighten, it makes a pleasant cup.

How to brew

1. 1 tea bag per 200ml.
2. Just boiled water.
3. Steep 5-7 minutes.
4. Sweeten with honey.
5. Add lime, lemon, or fresh ginger for brightness.

How often to drink

Traditional Caribbean usage: 1-3 cups weekly. NOT daily heavy consumption. The traditional pattern aligns with the epidemiological caution.

Cautions

- **Long term heavy intake.** Neurological concerns; limit to occasional consumption.
- **Pregnancy.** Avoid in pregnancy. More on pregnancy and tea.
- **Blood pressure medication.** Possible interaction.
- **Cancer treatment.** Don't substitute; discuss with oncologist.
- **Children.** Not traditionally given.

Caffeine

0mg.

UK availability

- **Dalgety Pure Soursop.** Specialist UK Caribbean tea brand.
- **Specialist Caribbean grocers.** London, Birmingham, Manchester especially.
- **Online specialist tea retailers.** Including teas.co.uk.
- **Some health food shops.** Holland & Barrett occasionally; varies.

More on UK availability.

The fruit specifically

Fresh soursop fruit is rarely found in UK retail (perishable; tropical only). Frozen pulp is sometimes available in Caribbean grocers. Soursop juice (canned/bottled) is more widely available. Tea is the most accessible UK form.

FAQ

What is soursop? A tropical tree producing both edible fruit and medicinally used leaves. Native to Central America/Caribbean.

Will soursop tea treat cancer? No. Some in vitro evidence; no human clinical evidence. Don't use as cancer treatment.

How often can I drink it? 1-3 cups weekly (traditional pattern). Avoid heavy daily long term consumption.

Caffeine free? Yes.

Pregnancy safe? No, avoid in pregnancy.

Curator's note: soursop is deeply respected in Caribbean diaspora cultures. The traditional drinking pattern (occasional, with cultural context) aligns with what evidence suggests is safe long term. Drink it the way Caribbean grandparents drank it. Lee, teas.co.uk, Tunbridge Wells.

Quick reference: soursop plant and tradition

Aspect	The note
Botanical name	Annona muricata; the Annonaceae family
Common names	Soursop, graviola, guanabana, brazilian paw paw
Native range	Caribbean, Central America, northern South America
Tree size	5-10m tall; a small-canopy fruit tree
Fruit	Green prickly oval; 1-5kg; white-pulp inside
Leaves used for tea	Mature dried leaves; the tea ingredient
Cultivation regions	Caribbean, West Africa, Southeast Asia, parts of South America
UK access	Dried leaves via ethnic-foods retail; fresh fruit rare

Worth keeping on the shelf around this article: English Breakfast, Earl Grey, green tea, loose leaf tea, Darjeeling, oolong, and herbal tea. For more, the full tea shop ships free across the UK over £35.

FROM THE CURATOR

teas · One careful pot of soursop leaf is worth more than five exotic bags rushed.

Soursop reading

Continue with soursop tea, soursop tea UK, Caribbean tea, the herbal tea family, world tea cultures and tropical tea.

More from the tea wiki

- Green tea
- Black tea

- Oolong tea
- White tea
- Herbal tea
- Caffeine in tea
- How to make tea properly
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