

Dragon Fruit

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In news

Recently, the state government of Gujarat has renamed the Dragon fruit as Kamalam as it has the shape of the lotus flower

What is dragon fruit?

- It is the fruit of a species of wild cactus indigenous to South and Central America, where it is called pitaya or pitahaya. It grows in all kinds of soil, and does not require much water
- Pitaya's flesh is usually white or red, although there is a less common yellow pitaya too and is studded with tiny seeds rather like the kiwifruit.
- Pitaya usually refers to fruit of the genus *Stenocereus*, while pitaya or dragon fruit refers to fruit of the genus *Hylocereus*, both in the family Cactaceae
- Seeds grow well in a compost or potting soil mix – even as a potted indoor plant. Pitaya cacti usually germinate after between 11 and 14 days after shallow planting. As they are cacti, overwatering is a concern for home growers.
- As their growth continues, these climbing plants will find something to climb on, which can involve putting aerial roots down from the branches in addition to the basal roots.
- Pitaya flowers bloom overnight and usually wilt by the evening. They rely on nocturnal pollinators such as bats or moths for fertilization

Cultivation of the Dragon fruit at global level

- Vietnam is the world's largest producer and exporter of dragon fruit, the **Dragon fruit** plant was brought by the

French in the 19th century.

- It is called thanh long in Vietnam, which translates to “dragon’s eyes”, believed to be the origin of its common English name.
- This fruit is also cultivated in Latin America (native here), Thailand, Taiwan, China, Australia, Israel, and Sri Lanka.

Its cultivation in India

- It was brought to India in the 1990s, and is grown in Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Odisha, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Health benefits of Dragon Fruit

- This fruit is rich in antioxidants like flavonoids, phenolic acid, and betacyanin.
- These natural substances protect your cells from damage by free radicals
- Dragon fruit is naturally fat-free and high in fiber
- This fruit may help lower one’s blood sugar
- It also contains prebiotics, which are foods that feed the healthy bacteria called probiotics in one’s gut
- It can also strengthen immune system, because it is high in vitamin C and other antioxidants, which are good for immune system