

# 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