

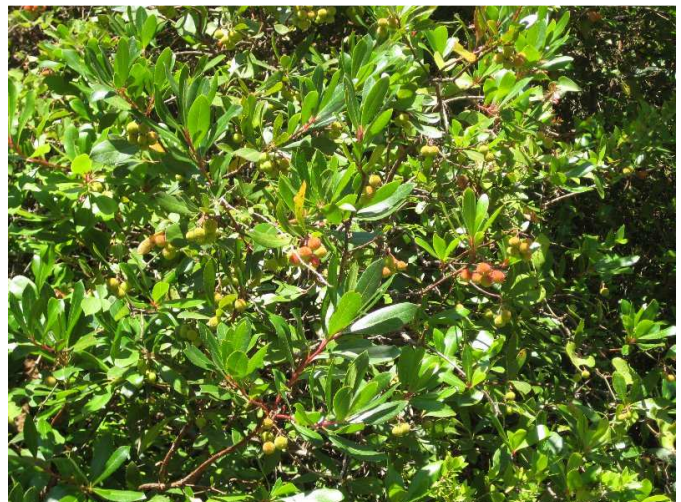
Information about the Environment and for travellers in Crete:

The western arbutus (*Arbutus unedo*) The foxy emperor (*Charaxes jasius*)

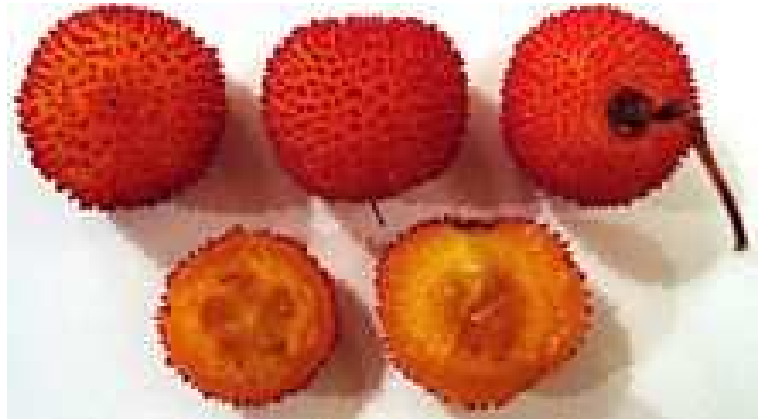


Arbutus are a plant genus from the family of the heath family (Ericaceae); it covers 11 kinds and is considered as paraphyletic, means this kinds are divided according to their geographical spreading, thus into old and new world kinds. The latter contain 7 kinds. The old world kinds count 4 kinds (and 2 hybrids), among the western arbutus (*Arbutus unedo*). It is a typical plant of the Mediterranean area and is also to be found on Crete; particularly frequently at the slopes to the road within the southern range of the Amari - artificial lake and from there along the road towards Apostoli, usually overgrown with myrtle, often up to 3 m high.

Arbutus is an evergreen bush or tree with a stature height of 3 - 5 meters. The crust is at first dark red, later grey-brown and cracked. The alternate leafs are of elliptical form, become about 11 cm long and about 4 cm broad and are about 1 cm long petiolate. They are dark green shining and at the edge finely toothed. The blossom is from October to Decembers. The blooms are usually white to light pink and bell-like. Those about 2 -3 cm in the diameter of size fruits of this winter-flowering plant mature so slowly, that the red fruits and the blooms hang at the same time on the tree. The fruits have a warty surface, are at first green and colour themselves with more increasingly ripe orange to red and then remind of a strawberry. The inside of the fruits is yellow-orange and from fleshy to floury consistency. The fruits are enjoyable and possess an easily sweet flavour.



The publishers thank here the forum visitor of our website, *Jürgen Unruh* [©], for the provided plant pictures of an *Arbutus* from locally on Crete.



In different regions of south Europe the fruits are converted to jams, liquor (Portugal, “Medronho”); on Sardinia also a bloom honey is well-known.



The fruits of the Arbutus are rich at Vitamin C and contain 16% sugar (in larger measure fructose), organic acid (malic acid), pectin materials and in overripe fruits also alcohol (0.5%). The leaves of the tree can be used, instead of laurel leaves, also as spice. They contain arbutin and in dried condition 16% Tannin. The leaves apply also in the medicine. They are used primarily with stomach intestine problems (Tea).

Closely linked to the Arbutus is the foxy emperor, whose caterpillar uses the sheets as fodder plant. Its occurrence is bound therefore strongly to the spreading of the Arbutus. It occurs within the coastal ranges of the Mediterranean to the central Africa, so also (although very rarely) on Crete. The foxy emperor is a butterfly in the family of the brushfoots (family Nymphalidae) and so one of the largest European butterflies. It flies in two generations from May to June and from August until Septembers. The female is somewhat larger than the male and reaches a forward wing length of over 40 mm and a span of over 9 centimetres.

The caterpillar is green coloured and possesses a bright, yellowish side stripe. They conform snails, since there their head cap carry 4, arranged upward reddish-brown horns, from those the two middle particularly stick out. See in addition also the following illustrations.

