PLANT FACT SHEET

Quassia amara L.

GENUS *Quassia* **FAMILY** Simaroubaceae

COMMON NAMES Quassia, Bitterwood, Suriname quassia

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Bark - flavouring

The bark is used as a substitute for hops in beer making.
An extract is used for flavouring soft drinks, bitter tonics, baked goods and candy.
Caution: Because of the alkaloids it contains it should not be eaten in large amounts.

DESCRIPTION

A shrub or small tree. It grows 6 m high. The leaves are compound and alternate. They have leaflets along the stalk. There are 5 leaflets each 5-15 cm long. The flowering groups hang down. They have pink stems and are in groups 25 cm long. The flowers are 3-4 cm long and tube shaped. The petals are pink outside and white inside. The stamens stick out the end. There are up to five fruit in a group. They are black and have one seed. They are 1.5 cm long and on a red, enlarged stalk.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. In Costa Rica it grows in moist sites along the Caribbean coast and up to about 700 m altitude.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. They can also be grown by grafting and cuttings.

NOTES

The medicinal benefits of the bark extract have been established.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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PROVIDED BY **Food Plants International**

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