PLANT FACT SHEET

Asparagus flagellaris (Kunth) Baker

GENUS *Asparagus* **FAMILY** Asparagaceae

COMMON NAMES Hyena thorn, Ethiopian asparagus

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Shoots, Root, Tuber, Vegetable

The young shoots are edible.
The fleshy root tubers are eaten after several hours cooking.
The fruit are sucked to get the juice from the fruit.

DESCRIPTION

An erect shrub. It grows 2 m tall. It has swollen root tubers. The branches may have spines. The branches arch over. The stems are grey white and without hairs. The leaves are small and like scales. There are leafy needle like structures in clusters along the stem. These have spines that curve back and with white spurs growing beside them. The stems are densely covered with needles 2 cm long. The flowers are white and 4 mm across. They have a scent. They are in groups of 2 or more on flowering stems. The fruit are small orange berries. They are round and have 1 seed.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. In Tanzania it grows in wooded grasslands at low and medium altitudes. It grows in savannah woodland, palm groves and woodland. It grows up to 2,100 m above sea level and in areas with 1,000-1,800 mm rainfall.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seeds or root suckers.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The fruit are collected during the dry spells in June-July and December. The shoots are collected during the rainy season.

NOTES

There are between 160-300 Asparagus species.

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