PLANT FACT SHEET

Syzygium polyanthum (Wight) Walp.

GENUS *Syzygium* **FAMILY** Myrtaceae

COMMON NAMES White kelat, Indonesian bay

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: leaves - condiment, Spice, Fruit

The leaves are used to flavour cooked dishes. One leaf is used. (It has a role a little like curry leaf.) The young leaves are commonly used as food. Pieces of meat can be boiled with the leaves and eaten together. They are used to flavour sauces, soups, cookies and vegetable dishes.
The ripe fruit is eaten.

DESCRIPTION

A tall tree. It grows 10-35 m tall. The trunk is straight and 60 cm across. The bark is grey with cracks along the length. The small young branches are slender and pink. The older woody twigs are greyish brown. The leaves are large, oval, dark green and shiny. The leaves grow opposite each other along the branch. The leaves taper towards the base. They are thinly leathery. They are about 10-16 cm long by 2-7 cm wide. They are broadest in the middle. There are 7-8 pairs of side veins which join near the leaf edge. The flower clusters develop where leaves have fallen off. Three flowers are grouped together. The flowering clusters occur below the leaves. Sometimes they are in the axils of leaves. They are 10 cm long. The flower stalk is 2-10 mm long. The fruit is about 1 cm across. The fruit ripen to pink or red or purple. The fruit is dark purple when ripe. There is one seed inside. The tip has a ring of enlarged calyx lobes. Young leaves are aromatic due to the presence of volatile oils.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in lowland forests. In Indonesia it grows up to 1,300 m altitude. It occurs in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. It grows in secondary forests. It needs good sunlight. It can tolerate drought. Because the fruit are eaten by animals, natural regeneration does not always occur well.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown by seeds, cuttings or air-layering. Seeds need to be sown fresh. A spacing of 6 m is suitable. Plants can be cut back and regrow.

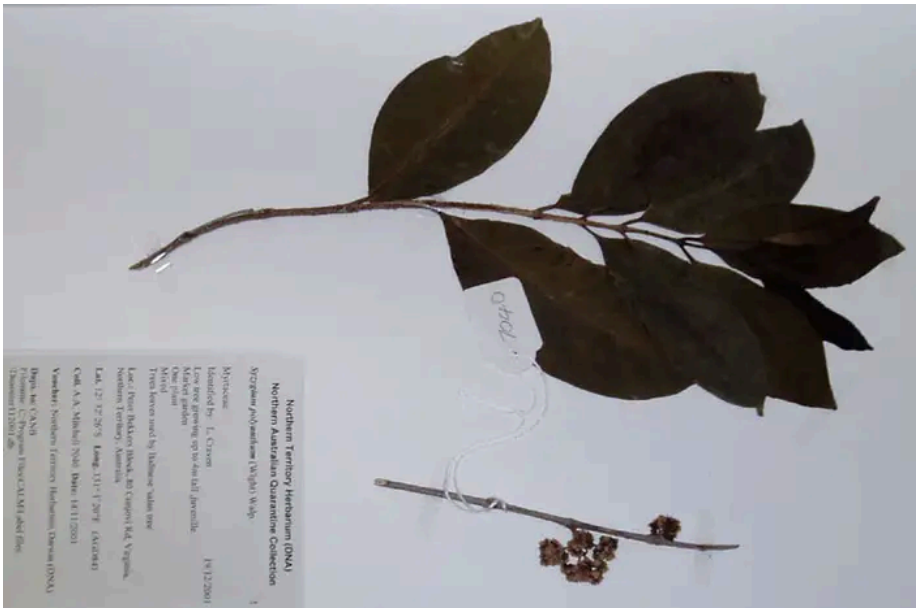
Harvesting and Seed Production

The younger paler leaves at the ends of stems are harvested. Fruit are produced year round.
It fruits prolifically. Flowering in the northern hemisphere is October to March and fruiting from October to April a year later. Flowering and fruiting season varies.

NOTES

The bark, roots and the leaves are used to relieve itchiness by the Malays.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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