PLANT FACT SHEET

Firmiana simplex (L.) W. Wight.

GENUS *Firmiana* **FAMILY** Malvaceae

COMMON NAMES Chinese parasol tree, Chinese bottle tree, Japanese varnish tree, Phoenix tree

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Root tuber, Latex, Gum

The seeds are cooked and eaten as a delicacy.
They are also roasted and used for a tea drink.
The gum is used for chocolates.

DESCRIPTION

A tree. It can have several stems. It loses its leaves during the year. It grows to 20 m high. It spreads 10 m wide. It has smooth bark. It is green but ages to grey. The leaves have 3-7 lobes. They are arranged like fingers on a hand. They are 30 cm across. They turn soft yellow before falling. The flowers are small and cream. They are in large groups on the ends of branches and in the axils of leaves. The fruit are reddish, papery, leaf-like follicles. These split and expose the seeds before they drop.

HABITAT

It is a subtropical plant. It is native to E Asia. It can grow in light shade. It needs wind protection. It can tolerate salt spray. It can stand very light frosts. It is best in well drained loams. It can tolerate fairly acid or alkaline soils. It suits hardiness zones 7-10. Hobart Botanical Gardens. In Sichuan and Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. The seed should be sown as soon as they ripen. The pulp should be washed from the seed. Seedlings should be grown for one year before planting out. They are easy to transplant. Trees should be spaced 6-10 m apart.

NOTES

There are 12 Firmiana species. Also put in the family Sterculiaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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