PLANT FACT SHEET

Dovyalis caffra (Hook. f. et Harv.) Warb.

GENUS *Dovyalis* **FAMILY** Salicaceae

COMMON NAMES Key apple

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit

The ripe fruit are eaten fresh and used in jams and desserts. The fruit are acidic.
Because the fruit are high in pectins they can be added in small amounts to help jams to jell and set.
The green fruit are also pickled.

DESCRIPTION

A spiny shrub. It grows up to 6-9 m tall. It has long straight spines on the trunk and branches. They are about 3 cm long. The bark is white when young. The leaves are simple and carried one after another along the stem. The edges of the leaves roll back slightly. The leaves are dark green and glossy. Plants are separately male and female. The female flowers are 3 mm long and light green. They occur as 1-3 together in the axils of leaves. The male flowers are in dense short clusters in the axils of leaves. The fruit are medium sized and yellow. They are round and 2.5-4 cm across. The skin is tough. The fruit are edible.

HABITAT

It is native to S and E Africa. It is subtropical. It can withstand drought but cannot tolerate frosts. They grow naturally in areas with temperatures in the range 14-22°C. Often they grow between 800 and 1200 m altitude but grow up to 2450 m altitude in Kenya. The rainfall where it grows naturally is 1000-1700 mm per year. It needs well drained soils. It is often on termite mounds. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 9-10.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Seed are collected from fruit. The ripe fruit are cracked and allowed to rot for one week before removing the seed. There are about 20 seeds in each fruit. The seeds should be sown immediately in a nursery bed. Seedlings come through the soil in 12 days. When bushes are established they need to have their crown thinned out to allow more fruit to be produced. The trees can be used as a fence or hedge. Trees can be grown from cuttings, air layering and grafting. It can be grown as a hedge.

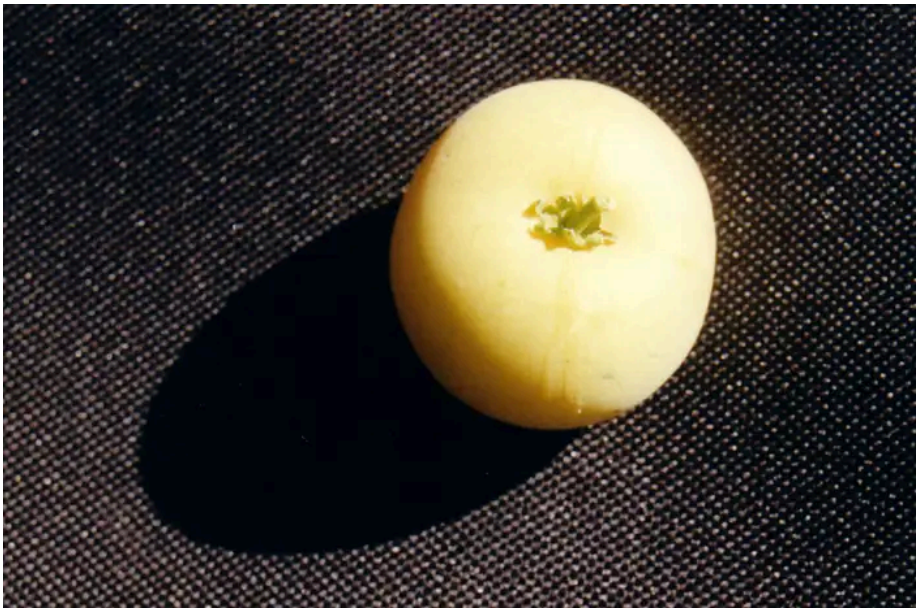
Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees produce fruit in 5-6 years from seed and 2-3 years from cuttings. Fruit need to be fully ripe when harvested. Fruit can be harvested after they fall. Fruit mature in 90 days.

NOTES

The fruit are rich in Vitamin C. There are about 22 Dovyalis species. Also put in the Flacourtiaceae family.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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