PLANT FACT SHEET

Attalea speciosa Mart. ex Spreng.

GENUS *Attalea* **FAMILY** Arecaceae

COMMON NAMES Babassu oil palm

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Oil, Fruit, Nuts, Seeds, Palm heart, Cabbage, Sap

The kernel of the nut is used to extract an edible oil. The kernels are eaten as a snack.
The watery contents are used as a drink.
Sap from the stem produces a palm wine.
The palm heart is eaten.
Ashes from the burnt stem are used as a salt substitute.
The flour is mixed with milk and sugar to produce a chocolate like drink.

DESCRIPTION

A palm. It grows 15-20 m high. The trunk is 40-50 cm across. The leaves are 7-10 m long with 153-206 leaflets on each side. . They are curved at the tip. The male flower sticks up among the leaves. It is 70-80 cm long. The female flower is larger. The fruit stalk is 1 m long. The fruit are oval and 8-10 cm long by 5-6 cm wide. They have a fibrous covering 1-4 mm thick. There are 4-6 seeds 4.5-6 cm long

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It grows in the lowlands in hot tropical monsoonal climates. It grows in forest and open areas. It grows in areas with 1200 mm of rain per year. In the Cairns Botanical Gardens. (As Orbigyna barbosiana). In Townsville palmetum.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. The ripe fruit are harvested and can be sown directly as seed. The seed only remain viable for a short time. They sprout after 4-6 months.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The palms start to flower in the tenth year. They can live for 200 years. It produces 2-6 fruiting clusters each year. The kernel is 66% oil. In Bolivia there are an average of 182-211 trees per hectare. Fruit yields are 2456-2624 kg per hectare.

NOTES

There are between (22) 30-71 Attalea species. Some authorities divide them among Attalea, Orbignya, Scheela and Maximiliana.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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