PLANT FACT SHEET

Poisonous

This plant, or parts of it, can be poisonous. Do not eat it unless you know which parts are safe and how they must be prepared.

Acokanthera oppositifolia (Lam.) Codd

GENUS *Acokanthera* **FAMILY** Apocynaceae

COMMON NAMES Bushman's poison, Poison bush

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit

CAUTION: This fruit is poisonous when unripe. It contains alkaloids that can affect the heart. Although used for jams it is probably not wise.
The fruit should only be used when very ripe.
The latex from the fruit is used by children as chewing gum.

DESCRIPTION

A bush or small tree. It grows 8 m tall. The leaves are 5-10 cm long by 2-5 cm wide. They are thick and leathery. They have a sharp spine like point. They are crowded in rings along the stem. The flowers are white or pink. They do not have stalks and are in dense clusters in the axils of leaves. The fruit are a plum shaped berry 1.4-2 cm long. They are bright red but purplish-black when ripe.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows on high hill-slopes and dry plateaux from East Africa to South Africa. It grows up to 2,400 m above sea level. It can grow in arid places. It grows in area with a rainfall between 600-1,000 mm. In Tanzania it grows between 1,500-2,100 m above sea level and can be on termite mounds. It grows in Miombo woodland in Africa. It suits hardiness zones 9-11.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It can be grown from seeds or semi-ripe cuttings.

NOTES

There are about 15 Acokanthera species. If this wood is used to cook food it can make the food poisonous.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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