PLANT FACT SHEET

Sterculia tragacantha Lindl.

GENUS *Sterculia* **FAMILY** Malvaceae

COMMON NAMES African tragacanth, Gum tragacanth

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Vegetable, Gum, Seeds

The stem produces a gum. The gum is used in ice cream and confectionary.
The young leaves are cooked and eaten as a potherb. They make a slimy sauce.
The seeds are roasted and eaten. They are also pounded and cooked with vegetables.

DESCRIPTION

A tree. It grows to 26 m high. The trunk can be 1.5 m around. It can have buttresses. The bark is grey-brown with cracks along it. The small branches have a dense covering of hairs. The leaves are 10-30 cm long by 5-15 cm wide. They are oval or sword shaped. They are rounded or slightly heart shaped at the base. The leaf stalk is 1.5-7.5 cm long. The flowers are reddish-pink. They occur in stalked clusters. These have dense brown hairs. The fruit are made up of 4-5 boat shaped cells. Each one is 5-7 cm long. They are bright red but turn brown when ripe. They split along the top to expose 8 seeds. The seeds are 18 mm long. They do not have a seed covering (aril).

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is native to tropical W and C Africa. It grows in woodland and savannah. It can be along rivers and in palm groves. It grows in open and drier parts of the lowland rainforest. It suits humid locations. It needs a well-drained soil. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seeds. It can also be grown from large cuttings. Trees re-grow after being cut down.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The seeds are collected during the dry season.

NOTES

Also put in the family Sterculiaceae.

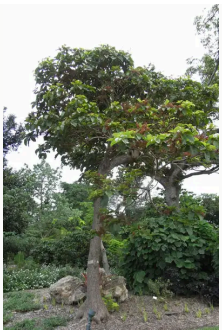
PICTURES



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French, B.R. & Maynard, A.R. Food Plants International Database. Food Plants International

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