PLANT FACT SHEET

Strychnos spinosa Lam.

GENUS *Strychnos* **FAMILY** Loganiaceae

COMMON NAMES Kaffir orange, Natal orange

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Leaves, Flowers, Vegetable

CAUTION: The seeds are poisonous. The skin is poisonous. Unripe fruit will cause vomiting.
The fruit pulp is eaten when fully ripe. It will not keep well. In some places it is cooked. It can be sun dried then stored. It is added to maize meal porridge. The fruit is fermented into a drink. It is also used for jam and jellies.
The young leaves are cooked and eaten.
CAUTION: Many Loganiaceae are very poisonous.

DESCRIPTION

A shrub which loses some of its leaves during the year. It can be spiny. It grows 4-5 m tall and can be 9 m tall. It has a large rounded crown. There can be one or several trunks. The branches can be flexible or stiff and smooth or hairy. The branches have spines in pairs which are 7 mm long and have a black tip. They are slightly curved backwards. The bark is grey brown and scaly. On old branches the bark becomes corky. The leaves are oval and up to 10 cm long. They are shiny green and hairy. They are produced opposite each other. They tend to be hairy and have 3-5 veins which start near the base of the leaf. The leaf base is wedge shaped. The flowers are small and pale green. They occur in groups at the ends of branches. The fruit is round and 5-17 cm across. It is green and becomes light brown at maturity. Sometimes the fruit is prickly. The fruit have a hard shell. The flesh of the ripe fruit is edible. The seeds are flat and poisonous. Fruit from trees with short fruit stalks are sweet while fruit from trees with long fruit stalks and narrow leaves are bitter.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in the drier areas of tropical Africa. It grows in the Sahel. It is in open woodland and secondary forest. It grows in areas with more than 500 mm rainfall per year. It will grow on slopes and ridges and is a tough tree. It grows up to 1,500 m altitude. In West Africa it grows up to 2,200 m altitude. It can grow in arid places. It grows in Miombo woodland in Africa. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It can be grown from seeds or basal shoots. It can also be grown from root cuttings. The seed has a hard seed coat so should be treated either by putting in hot water or by burning. It can be grown by grafting.

Harvesting and Seed Production

From flowering to fruit maturity takes 11-13 months. Fruit can be seen on the tree throughout the year. Because fruit are strongly attached to the tree they need to be cut off with a knife. They are often dropped onto the ground to break them open. A fruit can weigh 700 g.

NOTES

The fruit shell is ued for sound boxes for musical instruments.
The plant is used in medicine.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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Full reference list (64 more) at https://www.echocommunity.org/en/resources/12a7ccb4-b80f-4813-be52-371019bd2f92

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