PLANT FACT SHEET

Backhousia citriodora F. Muell.

GENUS *Backhousia* **FAMILY** Myrtaceae

COMMON NAMES Lemon Myrtle, Lemon Ironwood, Lemon Scented Myrtle

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves - flavouring, Spice

The leaves are used for flavouring and in herbal teas.
They can also be dried and crushed and used as a spice. They are used in cakes, biscuits, sauces and desserts. They are also the source of an essential oil.

DESCRIPTION

A large shrub or medium sized tree. It grows 3-15 m tall and spreads 2-6 m across. The bark is light brown and rough and scaly and flakes off. The leaves are broad sword shaped. They are hairy and reddish green when young but mature to a glossy deep green. Leaves are 5-12 cm long and 2.5-5 cm wide. The leaves have a sweet lemon smell. The flowers are in umbels 10-15 cm across. The flowers are small and white. They have 4 petals and the stamens are easy to see. The fruit has 2 cells.

HABITAT

A tropical and subtropical plant. Plants grow naturally in Queensland in Australia. They required acid well drained soils. A pH of 4.5-6.5 is suitable. A rainfall in the range 800-1100 m is adequate. It occurs naturally in the rainforest. It suits humid locations. Sheltered warm situations are needed and regular watering during dry periods is important. It is damaged by frost. It needs a minimum temperature above 5-7°C. It suits hardiness zones 9-10. Coffs Harbour Botanical Gardens.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from cuttings. It is important to use clonal propagation as oil quality varies considerably. Semi-ripe cuttings should be used. Plants can however be grown from seed. Seed should be near the surface and need temperatures above 13-15°C. Plants should be 3 m apart and well composted and mulched sites give better production.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is fairly slow growing. Leaves can be picked throughout the year. The older, mature, dark green leaves have the best flavour.

NOTES

There are 7-13 Backhousia species. They occur in Australia.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

REFERENCES

Alice, L. & O'Quinn, T., Australian Bush Superfoods. Explore Australia p 90

Anon., 2003, Native Plants for the Fitzroy basin. Society for Growing Australian Plants Inc. (Rockhampton Branch)

Barwick, M., 2004, Tropical and Subtropical Trees. A Worldwide Encyclopedic Guide. Thames and Hudson p 41

Bodkin, F., 1991, Encyclopedia Botanica. Cornstalk publishing, p 124

Bonney, N., 1997, Economic Native Trees and Shrubs for South Australia. Greening Australia (SA) inc. Campbelltown SA 5074 p 34

Bonney, N., 2012, Edible Wild Native Plants for Southern Australia. p 24

Brickell, C. (Ed.), 1999, The Royal Horticultural Society A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants. Convent Garden Books. p 158

Brown, D., 2002, The Royal Horticultural Society encyclopedia of Herbs and their uses. DK Books. p 139

Cooper, W. and Cooper, W., 2004, Fruits of the Australian Tropical Rainforest. Nokomis Editions, Victoria, Australia. p 342

Cronin, L., 1989, The Concise Australian Flora. Reed. p 166

Cundall, P., (ed.), 2004, Gardening Australia: flora: the gardener's bible. ABC Books. p 215

Elliot, W.R., & Jones, D.L., 1982, Encyclopedia of Australian Plants suitable for cultivation. Vol 2. Lothian. p 267

Etherington, K., & Imwold, D., (Eds), 2001, Botanica's Trees & Shrubs. The illustrated A-Z of over 8500 trees and shrubs. Random House, Australia. p 112

Facciola, S., 1998, Cornucopia 2: a Source Book of Edible Plants. Kampong Publications, p 140

Fragm. 1:78. 1859

Greig, D., 1996, Flowering Natives for Home Gardens. Angus & Robertson. p 59

Hemphill, I, 2002, Spice Notes. Macmillan. p 224

Jones D, L, 1986, Ornamental Rainforest Plants in Australia, Reed Books, p 67

Lord, E.E., & Willis, J.H., 1999, Shrubs and Trees for Australian gardens. Lothian. p 12

Melzer, R. & Plumb, J., 2011, Plants of Capricornia. Belgamba, Rockhampton. p 220

Molyneux, B & Forrester, S., 1997, The Australflora A-Z of Australian Plants. Reed. p 47

Nicholson, N & H., 1996, Australian Rainforest Plants 2, Terania Rainforest Publishing. NSW. p 12

PROSEA handbook Volume 13 Spices. p 274

Ratcliffe D & P., 1987, Australian Native Plants for Indoors. Little Hills press. p 60

Robins, J., 1996, Wild Lime. Cooking from the Bush food garden. Allen & Unwin p 136

Seidemann J., 2005, World Spice Plants. Economic Usage, Botany, Taxonomy. Springer. p 61

Smith, K & I., 199, Grow your own bushfoods. New Holland. Australia. p 5

Sukarya, D. G., (Ed.) 2013, 3,500 Plant Species of the Botanic Gardens of Indonesia. LIPI p 147

Townsend, K., 1994, Across the Top. Gardening with Australian Plants in the tropics. Society for Growing Australian Plants, Townsville Branch Inc. p 93

Williams, J.B., Harden, G.J., and McDonald, W.J.F., 1984, Trees and shrubs in rainforests of New South Wales and Southern Queensland. Univ. of New England, Armidale. p 103, 110

www.ceres.org/au/bushfood catalogue

PROVIDED BY **Food Plants International**

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

LICENCE CC BY-NC-SA 3.0

ONLINE FACT SHEET https://www.echocommunity.org/en/resources/12d9ad0f-d315-4c82-b6bb-c6024e7d086e