PLANT FACT SHEET

Semecarpus australiensis Engl.

GENUS *Semecarpus* **FAMILY** Anacardiaceae

COMMON NAMES Tar tree, Australian cashew nut, Marking nut

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, seeds, Nuts

The fruit kernel is eaten after careful preparation and cooking. The seed coat is removed.
The fleshy fruit stalk is eaten when fully ripe and after peeling.
Caution: Parts of the plant are highly toxic.

DESCRIPTION

A small evergreen tree, although it can lose many of its leaves during the year. It grows to 5-10 m tall and spreads to 2 m wide. Trees can be 40 m high. It has a dense round crown. The stem is erect and branching. The bark is smooth and brown. The leaves are simple and oblong. They are produced alternately along the branch. They are 10-30 cm long and 4-12 cm wide. The leaves are dark green above and much paler underneath. The veins are prominent and raised underneath the leaf. The leaf stalk is 1-2.5 cm long. Male and female flowers occur on separate trees. The flowers are very small and greenish white and at the ends of branches. The flowering branches can be 10-30 cm long and flowers 0.5 cm across. Male flowers do not have stalks and are smaller than female flowers. The fruit are round and brown. They are 2-3 cm wide. They have a coarse leathery skin. They are attached to a swollen fleshy orange base. They contain one seed.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It does best in sandy, moist soils. They need to be well-drained. It needs an open sunny position. It is damaged by drought and frost. Plants grow naturally in coastal areas in monsoon forests. They normally grow in areas with a seasonal climate. In Townsville palmetum.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown by seed. Seed need to be planted fresh.

Harvesting and Seed Production

In Australia, flowering is August to October and fruiting from November to January (February).

NOTES

The sap can irritate the skin.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

REFERENCES

Bodkin, F., 1991, Encyclopedia Botanica. Cornstalk publishing, p 924

Brock, J., 1993, Native Plants of Northern Australia, Reed. p 297 (Photo)

Checklist of NT Vascular Plant Species. January 2003.

Cherikoff V. & Isaacs, J., The Bush Food Handbook. How to gather, grow, process and cook Australian Wild Foods. Ti Tree Press, Australia p 201

Cooper W & Cooper W T, 1994, Fruits of the Rain Forest. RD Press p 256

Cooper, W. and Cooper, W., 2004, Fruits of the Australian Tropical Rainforest. Nokomis Editions, Victoria, Australia. p 18

Cribb, A.B. & J.W., 1976, Wild Food in Australia, Fontana. p 58

Ding Hou, 1978, Anacardiaceae in Flora Malesiana Series 1 Vol 8(3) p 510

Fell, D.G. & Stanton, D.J., 2015: The vegetation and flora of Mabuyag, Torres Strait, Queensland. Memoirs of the Queensland Museum – Culture 8(1):1-33. Brisbane. ISSN 1440-4788.

Henty, E.E., 1980, Harmful Plants in Papua New Guinea. Botany Bulletin No 12. Division Botany, Lae, Papua New Guinea. p13

Hinton, B & B., 1982, A Wilderness in Bloom. Wildflowers of tropical Australia. p 23

Isaacs, J., 1987, Bush Food, Aboriginal Food and Herbal Medicine. Weldons. p 85

Jackes, B.R., 2001, Plants of the Tropics. Rainforest to Heath. An Identification Guide. James Cook University. p 39

Janick, J. & Paul, R. E. (Eds.), 2008, The Encyclopedia of Fruit & Nuts. CABI p 29

Low, T., 1991, Wild Food Plants of Australia. Australian Nature FieldGuide, Angus & Robertson. p 96

Low, T., 1992, Bush Tucker. Australia's Wild Food Harvest. Angus & Robertson. p 91

Morley, B.D., & Toelken, H.R., (Eds), 1983, Flowering Plants in Australia. Rigby. p 190

Mua Bioversity Profile, 2013, Profile for Management of the Habitats and Related Ecological and Cultural Resources of Mua Island. Torres Strait Regional Authority Land & Sea Management Unit. p 152

Scarth-Johnson, V., 2000, National Treasures. Flowering Plants of Cooktown and Northern Australia. Vera Scarth-Johnson Gallery Association. Cooktown, Australia. p 122

Smith, N. M., 1991, Ethnobotanical Field Notes from the Northern Territory, Australia, J. Adelaide Bot. Gard. 14(1): 1-65

Smith, N., 1993, Bushfoods - an Annotated List: Fruit and Seeds Eaten by Aboriginal People in Northern Australia. Winnellie, NorthernTerritory. The Archives of the Rare Fruit Council of Australia.

Tiwi Plants and Animals. 2001, Aboriginal flora and fauna knowledge from Bathurst and Melville Islands, northern Australia. Northern Territory Botanical Bulletin; No. 24 p 78

Townsend, K., 1994, Across the Top. Gardening with Australian Plants in the tropics. Society for Growing Australian Plants, Townsville Branch Inc. p 333

World Checklist of Useful Plant Species 2020. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Yunupinu Banjgul, Laklak Yunupinu-Marika, et al. 1995, Rirratjinu Ethnobotany: Aboriginal Plant Use from Yirrkala, Arnhem Land, Australia. Northern Territory Botanical Bulletin No 21. Parks and Wildlife Commission of the Northern Territory. p 69

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/18ce2257-c98e-45b6-99c5-a9b4a36caa9d