PLANT FACT SHEET

Senna occidentalis (L.) Link

GENUS *Senna* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Coffee senna

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Seeds - coffee, Leaves, Leaves - tea, Flowers, Fruit, Pods, Vegetable

The seeds are roasted and used for coffee. (They contain no caffeine).
Caution: The seeds are poisonous unless roasted.
Young leaves and young seeds are eaten, cooked. The leaves are added to soups.
The unripe pods are cooked and eaten with rice.
The ashes of the pods are used as food salt.

DESCRIPTION

An annual herb or small shrub. It can continue growing for a few years. It grows 1-2.5 m high. The stems have few hairs. The leaf stalk has a gland at the base but there is no gland along the leaf axis. The leaves are compound. There are 4-6 pairs of leaflets. The leaf stalk is 2-3 cm long. The leaflets are oval and 4-12 cm long by 1.5-4 cm wide. They taper to the top and are rounded at the base. The flower stalks are very short. The flower cluster is in the axils of leaves. The petals are yellow and 0.9-1.5 cm long. The fruit is a narrow, slightly curved pod. It is 5-10 cm long by 0.5-1 cm wide. It has pale edges. They are flattened. They usually dry with a brown area along the pod. The seeds are compressed. There are 28-32 seeds inside. They are green or brown. They are 5 mm long. There are small pits on each side.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in monsoon forest as well as arid areas. It north Queensland it grows from sea level to 820 m altitude. In Africa it grows up to 2,400 m altitude. It can grow in acid, neutral or alkaline soils. It can grow in arid places.
Temperatures which average 12.5 - 28°C are suitable. It grows in areas with rainfalls between 500 and 4000 mm per year. A rainfall of 500 to 1000 mm is enough. In Papua New Guinea it has been recorded up to 700 m altitude.

PRODUCTION

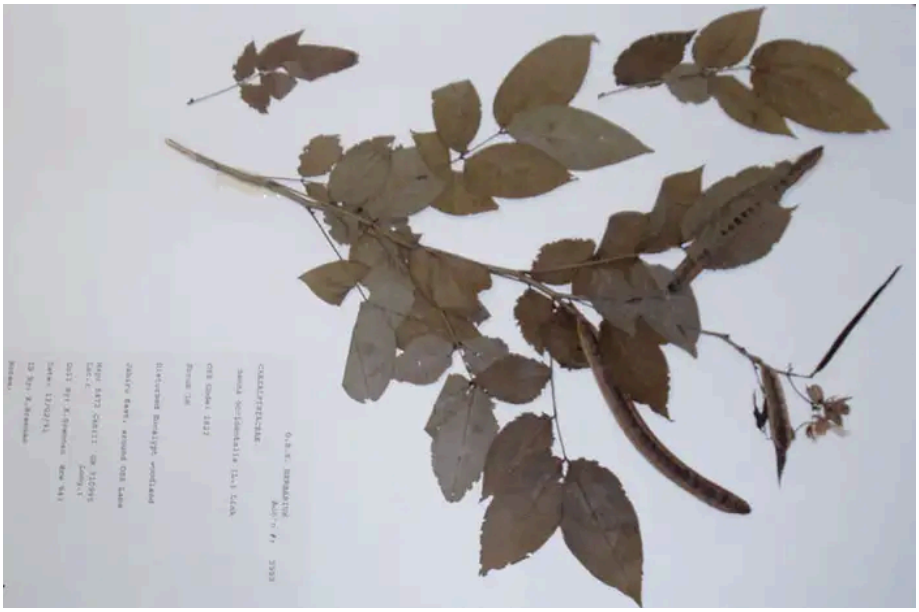
Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seeds.

NOTES

Also as Caesalpinaceae. It is used as a medicine in Indonesia. There are 100 Cassia species. This group has been revised to a smaller more consistent group. Chemical composition (Indian sample): moisture = 9.98%. Protein (N x 6.25) = 31.67. Fat (ether extract) = 4.51%. Carbohydrate (soluble) = 5.52%. Ash = 4.20%. Fe = 3.10%. Phosphorus = 1.80%. Amino acids (u mole/100 mg): a. Alanine = 15.10. Arginine = - . Asparagine = 21.3. Cysteine = - . Glutamine = 37.2. Glycine = 14.9. Histidine = 4.4. isoLeucine = 8.4. Leucine = 14.9. Lysine = 10.8. Methionine = 2.4. Methionine sulphonide = - . Phenylalanine = 7.9. Proline = 8.2. Serine = 15.9. Threonine = 9.3. Tyrosine = 4.1. Valine = 12.4. Unidentified = 1.4

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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