PLANT FACT SHEET

Oncoba spinosa Forssk.

GENUS *Oncoba* **FAMILY** Salicaceae

COMMON NAMES Fried egg tree, Snuff-box tree

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Seeds - oil

The pulp of the ripe fruit is eaten raw. The seeds are discarded.
The seeds yield an edible oil.

DESCRIPTION

It can be a shrub or a tree up to 6-12 m tall. The trunk can be 60 cm across. The branches have sharp spines produced in the axils of leaves. These can be 2-5 cm long. The leaves are simple and alternate. They are oval and 3-12 cm long by 2-10 cm wide. The tips are often long and drawn out. The leaves are dark green and shiny above and lighter and duller underneath. The leaf stalk is short. The flowers are large and white. They have a sweet scent. They are 5-8 cm across. The fruit are round and up to 6 cm across. They have a sharp growth at the tip. The skin is thin and hard. They are green and turn yellow. The pulp is yellow and mealy. There are many small flat reddish-brown seeds. The fruit are edible.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is native to Arabia and tropical Africa. It occurs over a wide range of altitudes. It grows in open woodland and among rocks and along rivers. It is often an under-storey tree in the forest. It does best in full sun but can tolerate light shade. It has some salt tolerance but cannot tolerate strong winds. In Malawi it grows up to 900 m altitude. In Ethiopia it grows between 690-2,350 m above sea level. It grows in areas with an annual rainfall of 550 mm and above. It can grow in arid places. It grows in Miombo woodland in Africa. Melbourne Botanical Gardens. It suits hardiness zones 9-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. It can also be grown from cuttings. It can be grown as a hedge.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is slow growing. In Tanzania fruit are collected from April to June.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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