PLANT FACT SHEET

Sterculia foetida Linn.

GENUS *Sterculia* **FAMILY** Malvaceae

COMMON NAMES Java olive, Poon tree, Skunk Tree, Wild almond

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Nuts, Seeds, Leaves, Roots

The seed kernels are eaten raw. They can also be roasted like chestnuts. They can be soaked to remove the skins before roasting. The seeds can be used for oil.
CAUTION: The seeds eaten in large numbers can cause diarrhoea and headaches. They probably should be cooked well. Immature seeds are not eaten.
The rootstock of the young plant can be eaten raw.
The leaves are used for food.

DESCRIPTION

A medium sized tree. It grows to 10-20 m high. The tree has a straight trunk and branches to form a small crown. The bark is brown and flakes off. It loses its leaves during the year. The leaves are crowded at the ends of branches. They are compound and with 7 to 9 leaflets borne in a ring at the end of the leaf stalk. Each leaflet is 10-18 cm long by 3-5 cm wide. They have a pointed tip. The leaf stalk is 15-24 cm long and grooved. The flowers are strongly scented. They are red, dull yellow or purple. They are 2-4 cm wide in clusters 15-20 cm long and shaped like a pyramid. Male and female flowers are separate. The fruit are large, woody, nearly smooth and oval. They are 7.5-10 cm long and flattened. They turn red when ripe. The ripe fruit splits open showing large black seeds. The seeds are edible.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. Plants grow in the tropical lowlands in dry woodlands. They are common throughout the islands of the Philippines along the seashores and partly open forests at low and medium altitudes. In Nepal it grows up to 300 m altitude. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. It can also be grown from mature cuttings. Some trees need cross pollination to produce fruit.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is fast growing. A tree can yield 20 kg of nuts.

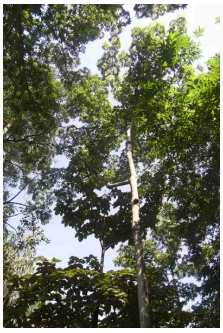
NOTES

Seeds are above-average for angiospermous plants for the amino acids: Alanine, Aspartic acid, Histidine, Isoleucine, Lysine, Methionine, Proline, and Valine.
Also put in the family Sterculiaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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