PLANT FACT SHEET

Anacardium occidentale L.

GENUS *Anacardium* **FAMILY** Anacardiaceae

COMMON NAMES Cashew

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Nuts, Leaves, fruit, Flavouring, Vegetable, Seeds, Oil

The fleshy "apple" is edible but acid until very ripe. It is used for jams and drinks. It is also candied, made into chutney and pickles.
The nut is eaten after good roasting. They are also pounded and used as meal.
The young shoots and leaves are edible. They are picked during the rainy season and eaten fresh with hot and spicy dishes.
CAUTION The oil of the nut can blister the skin till roasted.
The apple is used to make spirits.

DESCRIPTION

A spreading evergreen tree up to 7-14 m tall. It has spreading branches. The canopy can spread 12 m. The roots grow deeply and spread widely. The bark is rough. The trunk is 15-20 cm across. The leaves are alternate. The leaves are pale green and large. They are 10-15 cm long by 6-8 cm wide. They have fine veins. They are narrow at the base. The leaf stalk is 1-2 cm long. The leaves are shiny. The flowers are produced on the ends of the branches. They are red in colour. About 14 % of the flowers are both male and female and the remainder are male. Many of the flowers which contain female flower parts do not form fruit. The nut is borne below the "apple" which is really a fleshy stalk. The nut is kidney shaped. It is about 3 cm long.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It suits the lowland tropics but will grow up to about 1200 m altitude. It only bears well in dry areas because of blight of the flowers. It needs warm frost free locations. It grows with temperatures between 22-26°C. A rainfall of 1750 mm per year is considered suitable but good yields have been obtained with rainfall of 750 mm. Wider spacing is needed in drier areas. It can grow on poor soils. It needs good drainage. It is drought resistant. It grows in the Sahel. In South India it grows up to 1000 m altitude. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 11-12. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is usually grown from seeds. Seeds germinate poorly and slowly. Only nuts which sink in water (or a solution of 150 g of sugar in a litre of water) should be planted. Seeds are sun dried for 2-3 days to improve germination. Seeds can be sown in a nursery then transplanted or more commonly are sown directly. Trees are spaced 7-10 m

apart. The crop is cross pollinated mostly by insects. It can be propagated by air layering. For good production complete fertiliser or appropriate organic material should be applied. Pruning to shape the tree is often undertaken in the first 2 or 3 years. Cashews are often planted scattered in gardens or amongst other trees. Clearing under the tree prevents fire and makes finding nuts easier. Allowing nuts to fall before harvesting ensures only ripe nuts are collected. Resin in the cashew nut shell can damage hands and discolour the nuts. Roasting the nuts before removing the kernel avoids this.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees commence bearing after 3 years. Fruit production is seasonal. The fruiting season is normally October to January. Mature nuts are produced in 2-3 months. Yields of 80-200 kg per hectare of nuts are normal. Trees produce maximum after 10 years and trees last for about 100 years.

NOTES

There are 8-11 Anacardium species. They grow in tropical America. It has antioxidant, anti-diabetic and anti-ulcer properties.

PICTURES



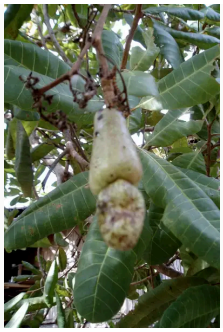
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