PLANT FACT SHEET

Use with caution

This plant can be harmful if it is eaten raw, in large amounts or without the right preparation. Read the whole fact sheet before use.

Blighia sapida Koenig

GENUS *Blighia* **FAMILY** Sapindaceae

COMMON NAMES Akee

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, seeds - aril, Flowers - flavour, Leaves

The fleshy white aril around the seeds is edible after the fruit opens naturally. It is often cooked by boiling in salt water. It looks like scrambled eggs after cooking.
CAUTION The seeds are poisonous. The unripe aril is inedible. The pink tissue between the aril and seed is poisonous. The aril must be fully ripe before eating. It is light on the open jacket that destroys the poison.
The flowers are used in the preparation of aromatic water.
The young leaves are cooked and eaten.

DESCRIPTION

A small evergreen tree up to 9-13-20 m tall. It spreads to 3 m across. The stem is erect and branching. It has a spreading, open-textured crown. The leaves are dark green with 6, 8 or 10 curved leaflets. The flowers are greenish white in branched flowers stalks, in the axils of leaves. They extend upwards. The fruit are in clusters. The fruit is about 9 cm long and red when ripe. The fruit has five segments. It is roughly pear shaped. The fruit opens naturally when ripe and usually has 3 black seeds inside. These are covered with yellowish flesh called an aril. The aril is edible. The pink tissue is toxic. Unripe fruit are toxic.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is native to tropical West Africa. It suits the humid tropical lowlands. It grows up to 900 m above sea level. It needs 2,000 mm of rain per year. It does best in moist, well composted soils in a sheltered, sunny position. It is drought and frost tender. It can grow in the subtropics and survive with temperatures near freezing. It suits hardiness zones 10-12. At ECHO.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Trees can be grown by seeds or cuttings. They can also be grafted.

Harvesting and Seed Production

In warm climates it grows quickly. It often bears two crops per year. It starts to produce after 4 years. Trees can keep producing for 50 years. Fruit matures in about 90 days.

NOTES

There are 4 Blighia species. It is a good source of beta-carotene and Vitamin C. Hypoglycin-A was isolated for the first time from the 'edible' aril of Blighia sapida (Ackee tree) and subsequently traced as the cause of an intoxication known as 'Jamaica vomiting sickness".

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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