PLANT FACT SHEET

Terminalia bellirica (Gaertn.) Roxb.

GENUS *Terminalia* **FAMILY** Combretaceae

COMMON NAMES Myrobalans, Bedda nuts

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: seeds, Fruit, Gum, Nuts, Oil

CAUTION: The kernels although eaten may have poisonous affects. It is probably the fruit that have a purgative effect.
The kernels are eaten in small amounts after roasting. They taste like almonds.
The fruit are used for making preserves. They can be eaten raw but are bitter.
The bark is fermented into a type of wine.

DESCRIPTION

A tall tree which loses its leaves during the year. It grows to 50 m tall and can be 3.5 m across. As a young tree it is narrow, upright and compact but develops buttresses and becomes more spreading with age. The branches come out in layers and are short. Young leaves can be bronze and old leaves turn bright red before falling. The leaves have long stalks. They are alternate. They are 9-26 cm long by 5-14 cm wide. They are mostly at the ends of branches. They are oval and leathery. The base is narrowed and unequal. The flowers do not have stalks. They are yellowish and in slender spikes in the axils of leaves. They have a strong odour. The fruit is oval and has a hard covering over the seed. It is woody and 2-3 cm across. The fruit is covered with brownish velvety hairs.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. In Nepal is grows to about 1100 m altitude. They are common in mixed forests throughout India. It grows in areas with a rainfall between 90-300 cm. It can tolerate most soils. It does best in deep sandy loams that are well drained. It can tolerate drought and withstand frosts. In southern China it grows between 540-1,350 m altitude. In XTBG Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. It helps to soak seeds in warm water for 24-36 hours before planting. The whole fruit is sown and if kept watered germinates in 1-2 months. Fruit fed to cattle allow the seed to pass through and these germinate quickly. Plants are best at a spacing of 5 m. It can be grown from stem cuttings of 1 year old branches with 2-3 nodes. Rooting hormone helps.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Seedling growth is slow. Trees can be 8 m high in 6-7 years. Trees flower and fruit regularly. The dry kernel is 47% oil. In northeastern India fruit occur between December and February. In southern China plants flower in March to April and fruit May to July.

NOTES

There are about 200-250 Terminalia species. They are tropical. It is used in medicine.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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French, B.R. & Maynard, A.R. Food Plants International Database. Food Plants International

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