PLANT FACT SHEET

Calamus caryotoides C. Martius

GENUS *Calamus* **FAMILY** Arecaceae

COMMON NAMES Fish-tail lawyer cane

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Shoots

The fleshy layer around the seed is eaten.

DESCRIPTION

A tall slender climbing palm or rattan. It can have one or many stems. It forms clumps and forms a tangled thicket. Vines can be 15 m long. The stems have needle-like spines. It has whip-like climbing structures which develop for the top of the leaf sheath opposite the stalk. These can be 1-2.5 cm long and have hooks which curve backwards. It has feather-like leaves. These are distributed along the stem at fairly wide intervals. The leaflets are wedge shaped with the end pair united to form a fish tail. The leaves are 20-70 cm long with 6-12 pairs of shiny, pale green leaflets. These are 10-20 cm long by 4-6 cm wide. They have jagged tips. The flowering stalk is long and hangs downwards. It is 1-2.5 cm long with a few short branches. Several flowering stalks are often present at the same time. Male and female flowers are on separate plants, The flowers are cream and 2-4 mm across. The fruit are cream when ripe and round. They are 8-13 mm across and covered with overlapping scales. They have a thin outer coat. This is edible. It contains a single seed. The seed is 8 mm by 6 mm.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It grows along the edges of drier rainforests. They do best with a warm, well-drained site. Light shade is good and the soil should be rich. They are very frost sensitive when young. In Northeast Australia they grow from sea level to 1,000 m altitude. They can grow in warm temperate frost free places. In the Cairns Botanical Gardens. It suits hardiness zones 9-12. Mt Cootha Botanical Gardens.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Seed usually grow within 6 months. Seedlings and suckers are difficult to transplant.

Harvesting and Seed Production

They are fast growing. In Australia, fruiting occurs from April to December.

NOTES

There are 375-400 Calamus species. There are 175 species in tropical Asia.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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