PLANT FACT SHEET

Berchemia discolor (Klotzsch) Hemsley

GENUS *Berchemia* **FAMILY** Rhamnaceae

COMMON NAMES Bird plum, Brown ivory, Mountain date

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Gum, Leaves

The ripe fruit are eaten raw or dry. They are also used to flavour porridge. The dried fruit can be stored.
The dried fruit (after the kernel is removed) are pounded with millet seeds and made into a biscuit dough and baked.
The fruit are also fermented into an alcoholic drink. Caution: Alcohol is a cause of cancer.
The fruit can be used for juice, jam and sweets.

DESCRIPTION

A tree. It grows 12-18 m tall. It usually loses its leaves during the year. The branches are spreading. The crown is dense and round. The leaves are simple and nearly opposite. They are dark green above and paler underneath. They are 2.5-10 cm long and 8 cm wide. They are oval with pointed tips. The flowers are in small stalked clusters in the axils of leaves. The fruit are like small pointed plums. They are about 2 cm long. They are yellow or red. They have a sweet yellow pulp and a kernel with 2 seeds. The fruit are edible.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in dry forest. It grows at low altitude in South Africa. In East Africa it grows from sea level to 1,600 m altitude. It is damaged by frost or cold winds. It is drought resistant. It grows in areas with an annual rainfall between 300-635 mm. It can grow in arid places. It is often on termite mounds. It grows in the lowlands and along rivers. It grows in Miombo woodlands.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from fresh seeds. The seeds germinate easily. Seedlings can then be transplanted. Seeds can also be sown directly in the field. Plants can also be grown from root suckers.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants grow very slowly. When dry, the fruit can be stored for a long time. Fruit are normally available in the wet season.

NOTES

There are 12 Berchemia species. They are very high in sugar. The Vit C content of the pulp is 65 mg/100g.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

REFERENCES

Addis, G., Asfaw, Z & Woldu, Z., 2013, Ethnobotany of Wild and Semi-wild Edible Plants of Konso Ethnic Community, South Ethiopia. Ethnobotany Research and Applications. 11:121-141

Addis, G., et al, 2013, The Role of Wild and Semi-wild Edible Plants in Household Food Sovereignty in Hamer and Konso Communities, South Ethiopia. Ethnobotany Research & Applications. 11:251-271

Alfarhan, A. H., 2005, Flora of Jizan Region. AR 17-7. King andulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST). p 259

Asfaw, Z. and Tadesse, M., 2001, Prospects for Sustainable Use and Development of Wild Food Plants in Ethiopia. Economic Botany, Vol. 55, No. 1, pp. 47-62

Awodoyin, R.O., Olubode, O.S., Ogbu, J.U., Balogun, R.B., Nwawuisi, J.U. and Orji, K.O., 2015, Indigenous Fruit Trees of Tropical Africa: Status, Opportunity for Development and Biodiversity Management. Agricultural Sciences, 6, 31-41

Bahru, T., et al, 2013, Wild Edible Plants: Sustainable Use and Management by Indigenous Communities in and the Buffer Area of Awah National Park, Ethiopia. Ethiop. J. Sci., 36(2): 93-108

Beche D, Gebeyehu G, Feyisa K., 2016, Indigenous Utilization and Management of Useful Plants in and around Awash National Park, Ethiopia. J Plant Biol Soil Health. 3(1):12.

Bekele-Tesemma A., Birnie, A., & Tengnas, B., 1993, Useful Trees and Shrubs for Ethiopia. Regional Soil Conservation Unit. Technical Handbook No 5. p 106

Bircher, A. G. & Bircher, W. H., 2000, Encyclopedia of Fruit Trees and Edible Flowering Plants in Egypt and the Subtropics. AUC Press. p 58

Campbell, B. M., 1987, The Use of Wild Fruits in Zimbabwe. Economic Botany 41(3): 375-385

Cunningham, 1985,

Ethiopia: Famine Food Field Guide. http://www.africa.upenn.edu/faminefood/category3.htm

Facciola, S., 1998, Cornucopia 2: a Source Book of Edible Plants. Kampong Publications, p 190

FAO. 1983, Food and fruit-bearing forest species 1: Examples from Eastern Africa. FAO Food and Forestry Paper 44/1 p 19

Feyssa, D. H., et al, 2011, Seasonal availability an consumption of wild edible plants in semiarid Ethiopia; Implications to food security and climate change adaptation. Journal of Horticulture and Forestry 3(5): 138-149

Flora Zambesiaca. http://apps.kew.org/efloras

Food Composition Tables for use in Africa FAO http://www.fao.org/infoods/directory No. 871

Fowler, D. G., 2007, Zambian Plants: Their Vernacular Names and Uses. Kew. p 53

Fox, F. W. & Young, M. E. N., 1982, Food from the Veld. Delta Books. p 312

Global Plants JSTOR

Goode, P., 1989, Edible Plants of Uganda. FAO p 30

Grivetti, L. E., 1980, Agricultural development: present and potential role of edible wild plants. Part 2: Sub-Saharan Africa, Report to the Department of State Agency for International Development. p 71

Ichikawa, M., 1980, The Utilization of Wild Food Plants by the Suiei Dorobo in Northern Kenya. J. Anthrop. Soc. Nippon. 88(1): 25-48

INFOODS:FAO/INFOODS Databases

Jardin, C., 1970, List of Foods Used In Africa, FAO Nutrition Information Document Series No 2.p 123

Liengme, C. A., 1981, Plants used by the Tsonga people of Gazankulu. Bothalia 13, 3 & 4: 501-518

Long, C., 2005, Swaziland's Flora - siSwati names and Uses http://www.sntc.org.sz/flora/

Lovett, J. C. et al, Field Guide to the Moist Forest Trees of Tanzania. p 125

Lulekal, E., et al, 2011, Wild edible plants in Ethiopia: a review on their potential to combat food insecurity. Afrika Focus - Vol. 24, No 2. pp 71-121

Magwede, K., van Wyk, B.-E., & van Wyk, A. E., 2019, An inventory of Vhavend useful plants. South African Journal of Botany 122 (2019) 57–89

Malaisse, F., 1997, Se nourrir en floret claire africaine. Approche ecologique et nutritionnelle. CTA., p 57

Malaisse, F., 2010, How to live and survive in Zambezian open forest (Miombo Ecoregion). Les Presses Agronomiques de Gembloux.

Mannheimer, C. A. & Curtis. B.A. (eds), 2009, Le Roux and Muller's Field Guide to the Trees and Shrubs of Namibia. Windhoek: Macmillan Education Namibia. p 306

Maroyi, A., 2011, The Gathering and Consumption of Wild Edible Plants in Nhema Communal Area, Midlands Province, Zimbabwe. Ecology of Food and Nutrition 50:6, 506-525

Maroyi, A. & Cheikhyoussef, A., 2017, Traditional knowledge of wild edible fruit in southern Africa: A comparative use patterns in Namibia and Zimbabwe. Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge. 16(3): 385-392

Mashile, S. P., et al, 2019, Indigenous fruit plants species of the Mapulana of Ehlanzeni district in Mpumalanga province, South Africa. South African Journal of Botany 122 (2019) 180–183

Maundu, P. et al, 1999, Traditional Food Plants of Kenya. National Museum of Kenya. p 74

Mgalula, M. E., 2024, An ethnobotanical study of wild edible fruits in miombo woodlands of Tabora region in Western Tanzania. Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine. 20:23

Mpasiwakomu, R. A., 2017, The Diversity and Utilization of Wild Edible and Medicinal Plant Species found in Uvinza Miombo Woodlands, Tanzania. M. Sc. thesis University of Tanzania.

Full reference list (38 more) at https://www.echocommunity.org/en/resources/41d526f9-48c3-4050-9dbf-422480a65f57

PROVIDED BY **Food Plants International**

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

LICENCE CC BY-NC-SA 3.0

ONLINE FACT SHEET https://www.echocommunity.org/en/resources/41d526f9-48c3-4050-9dbf-422480a65f57