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.

Aesculus californica (Spach.) Nutt.

GENUS *Aesculus* **FAMILY** Sapindaceae

COMMON NAMES Californian Buckeye, Berraco, Californian Horse-Chestnut

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds

Caution: This plant contains saponins which although poisonous are not normally easily absorbed by the body. It is nevertheless probably not wise to eat large quantities.
The seeds are eaten cooked. Before eating they are slowly roasted then crushed and washed for 2-5 days in running water. They are then dried and ground into a powder.

DESCRIPTION

A tree which grows to 12 m tall. It spreads to 10 m across. It loses its leaves during the year. The bark is pale grey and nearly smooth and is thinly scaly. The leaves have leaflets arranged like fingers on a hand. There are 5-7 oblong leaflets. These have teeth along the edge. The leaflets are 15 cm long. They are deep blue-green above and grey-green underneath. The flowers are white or pale pink. They occur in dense cylinder shaped upright panicles. These are 20 cm long. The flowers have a scent. The fruit is smooth and pear shaped. It is 7 cm long. The seed is large and can be 5 cm across. It is glossy brown.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It grows naturally near moist stream borders, scrub and the edges of oak and pine woods in canyons and dry slopes below 1200 metres in California. It requires a dry well drained sunny location. It does best in areas where the temperatures do not go below -10°C. It suits hardiness zones 7-10.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed. The seed should be sown fresh but germinate quickly. Plants transplant easily. Stored seed should be soaked for 24 hours before sowing. It can be grown from root cuttings.

Harvesting and Seed Production

A moderately fast-growing and long-lived tree.

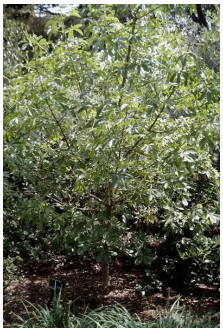
NOTES

The seed contains about 23% protein on a fresh weight basis. There are 13 Aesculus species. Also put in the family Hippocastanaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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