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.

Dipteryx odorata (Aublet) Willd.

GENUS *Dipteryx* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Tonka Bean

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Spice

It is used to flavour liqueurs. The beans are soaked for several days in rum or alcohol then dried and cured. The bean extract is used to flavour food. It is used in candy, baked goods, ice cream, cocoa and other foods. It is used as a vanilla substitute.
Caution: The seeds probably contain coumarin which is toxic and cancer causing.
The inner part of the pod pulp is edible.

DESCRIPTION

A tree. It grows up to 40 m tall. The trunk can be 1 m across. The taproot is only 1 m deep but it has anchor roots and a mass of surface roots. The leaves are alternate. They are compound with leaflets along the stalk. The leaves are leathery and glossy green. The axis of the leaf is flattened and has wings. There are 3-6 leaflets. They can be opposite or alternate. They are elliptical but have unequal sides. They are 15 cm long by 8 cm wide. The flowering panicle has red-blue flowers. The fruit is fleshy and with a stone inside. It is oval and 7-10 cm long by 3-6 cm wide. It is pale yellow-brown. The flesh is pulpy. The skin is hard. The seed is usually wrinkled and 3-5 cm long by 1-2 cm wide. It is dull black and weighs 3g.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It suits hot humid tropical lowland climates. It grows in tropical rainforest often along river banks. It needs a rainfall of 1500-1750 mm per year. It grows up to 350 m altitude. It does best in humus rich soils which are low in calcium.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are usually grown from seed. It can be grown from cuttings. Plants are spaced 3 m apart and thinned out later. Trees are topped when 2 m tall to encourage branching.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Flowering and fruiting start after 7-10 years. Good crops are only produced every 2-3 years. Plants are pollinated by insects. The yield of dried beans per tree is 1 kg per year, but yields of 25 kg are possible. Plants can probably live for 1,100 years.

NOTES

It contains couarin.

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