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.

Cussonia spicata Thunb.

GENUS *Cussonia* **FAMILY** Araliaceae

COMMON NAMES Cabbage tree, Spiked cabbage tree

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Roots, Leaves

The roots are chewed for their moisture and the fibre spat out. The thick young roots or tubers are dug out and peeled and chewed.
CAUTION: There are reports that the roots are poisonous.
The fruit are eaten.

DESCRIPTION

A thickset tree. It grows 3-10 m tall. The bark is yellowish-grey. It is thick and corky. The leaves are crowded near the ends of the branches. They are compound leaves and up to 70 cm across. There are 5-9 leaflets from the end of a stout leaf stalk. This can be 40 cm long. The leaflets are dark green or bluish-green. They are lobed and dissected. The edge has sharp teeth. The flowers are greenish-yellow. They are closely packed along 8-12 thick spikes. These are 5-15 cm long by 1.5-4 cm wide. The fruit is angular. It is 4-6 mm across. They are purple when mature.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is native to E and S Africa. It grows on mountain slopes and dry lowveld. It loses its leaves with heavy frost. In Malawi it grows between 1,250-2,450 m altitude. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 9-11.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from fresh seed. It can also be grown from cuttings.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees are fast growing.

NOTES

There are 20 Cussonia species. They occur in South Africa.

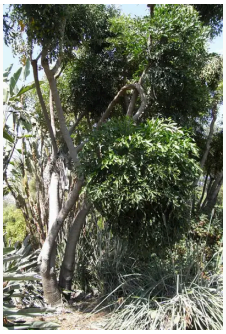
PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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