



PLANT FACT SHEET

Burkea africana Hook.

GENUS *Burkea* FAMILY Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Rhodesian ash, Red syringa

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Gum, Bark - drink, Leaves

The gum is eaten.

The bark is used for flavouring spirits and beer.

The leaves are used as a yeast.

DESCRIPTION

It can be a small or medium sized tree. It is often 5-8 m tall but also up to 21 m tall. It has a flat crown. The bark is dark and rough and flakes off. The twigs are robust ending in a stubby tip. The young growing tips are covered with velvety red hairs. The leaves are blue-green. The leaves are up to 38 cm long and droop. They are clustered near the ends of branches. The leaves are twice divided with 2-4 pairs of side branches and these have 5-11 leaflets. The leaflets are oval and 2.5 cm long by 1.9 cm wide. They are silvery when young. The flower buds are small and greenish-yellow. They occur in long strings at the ends of branches. The flowers are yellow with a sweet scent. The pods are 3-8 cm long and 1.9-2.5 cm wide. They are flat, brown and woody. They normally only have one seed.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It occurs in sandy areas of dry open bush. In South Africa it grows from 600-1370 m altitude. It needs an annual rainfall above 450 mm. In Zimbabwe it grows in areas with a rainfall between 850-950 mm per year. It can grow in salty soils. It does not suit wet soils. It can grow in arid places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants do not grow easily from seed. Plants have roots near the surface and when these are damaged, new shoots develop and plants can be grown by cutting these off and replanting.

NOTES

In Africa a popular caterpillar eats this tree and these are roasted and eaten by people.

This legume tree does not form nodules.

Also as Caesalpinaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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