PLANT FACT SHEET

Pandanus brosimos Merrill & Perry

GENUS *Pandanus* **FAMILY** Pandanaceae

COMMON NAMES Wild karuka

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Nuts, Seed

The kernel of the nuts is eaten.
(Sometimes nuts are stored in the ground to soften the hard shell.)

DESCRIPTION

A screwpine with erect leaves which are normally not bent at the tip. The wild karuka plant looks a lot like the cultivated karuka except that the leaves are bigger and normally they point straight up instead of bending over at the top. The trunk of the tree is straight like a palm but it can have some branches near the top. The leaves are long and have thorns along the edge. Dead leaves normally hand down around the top of the tree. The leaves are close together. The leaves at the centre turn red then white at fruiting time. The fruit is a round cluster of nuts. The ends of the individual nuts come to a sharper point than in cultivated karuka. The shell of the nuts is very hard. The large fruit is made up of about 1000 nuts. The fruit hangs on a stalk against the trunk. Different varieties of wild karuka are recognised. These have different shaped nuts. Other small differences are also noticed by village growers. As a wild karuka plant is getting ready to produce a bunch of nuts the leaves at the top of the tree go tightly together and stick straight up. Then the top of the leaves become a red colour (With cultivated karuka the top of the leaves change to a white colour.)

HABITAT

A tropical plant. The usual range is from 2500 to 3100 m altitude. Some are transplanted to lower altitudes.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Trees are normally self sown but some are transplanted. Self sown plants are weeded, protected and owned. The wild karuka is disemminated throughout the high altitudinal forest as single widely spread trees and the dispersal agent is claimed to be marsupials (tree kangaroos etc). Some are transplanted to lower altitudes. The fruiting is seasonal and often a good season occurs every second year. Individual people within the clan are given permission to look after different sections or trees and these people clear the bush near the base of the tree and build traps to stop tree kangaroos.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The fruiting is seasonal and often a good season occurs every second year.

NOTES

There are about 600 Pandanus species. They grow in the tropics.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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