PLANT FACT SHEET

Diospyros blancoi A. DC.

GENUS *Diospyros* **FAMILY** Ebenaceae

COMMON NAMES Mabolo, Velvet apple

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit

The fruit is eaten fresh or made into jellies or juice. The fleshy portion of the fruit is eaten raw when ripe. The hairs and skin are removed.

DESCRIPTION

A large tree. It can grow to 20 m or more high. Often it is only a small tree. It is a spreading tree with drooping branches. The leaves are smooth but covered with fine soft hairs. They are 7.5-22.5 cm long by 2.5-7.5 cm wide. The leaves are dark green on the top surface and copper coloured underneath. Flowers are in small clusters of 2-3 together in the axils of leaves. Both male and female flowers occur. These are on separate trees. The flowers are cream and have a slight scent. The fruit are round and 5-8 cm across. The fruit colour is pink to brown. It can be dark red or purple. The fruit have short silky hairs and have the sepals still attached. The flesh is white and sweet but has a cheesy unpleasant smell. The fruit are like a flat persimmon but have a velvety appearance. Often fruit contain many large seeds. Seedless fruit also occur.

HABITAT

A tropical and subtropical plant. It suits the hot humid tropical lowlands. Mature trees can withstand light frost for short times. Young trees do not tolerate low temperatures. It is better to have trees in sheltered places protected from cold winds. Slightly acid, moist and free draining soils are best. It can grow in sun or light shade. It cannot tolerate salt. Plants grow naturally in the Philippines. It is common and widely distributed in the forests of the Philippines. It has become established wild in the bush in the Gazelle Peninsula of Papua New Guinea. It grows from sea level to 200m altitude in Taiwan. It suits hardiness zones 9-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

They are cultivated for the fruit popularly known as mabalo. Trees are mostly grown from seed. Plants are normally grown from seed. A spacing of 5 m is needed. Trees should be left unattended prior to flowering. It is possible to do grafting and air-layering.

Harvesting and Seed Production

A slow growing tree. It may take three years for seedling trees to be large enough to transplant. Fruiting is not normally seasonal. Fruit ripening takes 2-4 months from flowering.

NOTES

There are about 485 species of Diospyros mostly in the tropics.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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French, B.R. & Maynard, A.R. Food Plants International Database. Food Plants International

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