PLANT FACT SHEET

Vachellia erioloba (E. Meyer) P.J.H. Hurter

GENUS *Vachellia* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Camel thorn

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Gum, Seeds - coffee, Fruit

The gum is eaten. It has an acrid taste.
The roasted seed can be used as a substitute for coffee.
The fruit pulp is eaten as a famine food.

DESCRIPTION

A shrub or tree. It varies greatly. It can be a spiny shrub 2 m high or a tree 16 m high. It can have a wide spreading crown. The bark is dark brown and deeply furrowed. The spines are 6 cm long. Often they have a swollen base. The leaves are compound. They have 2-5 pairs of leaf stalks with 8-15 pairs of leaflets on each. There are up to 50 pairs of pinnules on each pinnae. The flowers are bright golden yellow balls. The fruit is a thickened, short flat pod. It is 11 cm long by 4.7 cm wide. The seeds are dark reddish-brown.

HABITAT

It is a subtropical plant. It grows in dry woodland and arid stony areas. It grows in hot arid places. It can tolerate dry conditions and frost. It grows in areas with an annual rainfall between 40-900 mm. It grows between 120-1,675 m above sea level. It suits hardiness zones 9-11. It grows well in dry, well-drained soil. It needs an open sunny position. It is resistant to drought and frost.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seeds. The seeds are put into boiling water and soaked for 24 hours. They are then dried and planted 2 cm deep. It has a long taproot so is difficult to transplant. Plants need watering when young.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The plants are slow growing.

NOTES

There are about 1,350 Acacia species. Over 1,000 occur in Australia. The gum is 43% protein. Also as Mimosaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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