PLANT FACT SHEET

Burckella obovata (Forster. f.) Pierre

GENUS *Burckella* **FAMILY** Sapotaceae

COMMON NAMES Bukubuk, Red silkwood tree

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit

The fruit is eaten raw. Occasionally the fruit is baked.

DESCRIPTION

A tree which can be up to 30 m tall and with buttresses. The trunk can be 3 m across. A white sticky sap is produced from the broken ends of twigs and leaves, which is typical of this family of trees. Leaves tend to be clustered near the ends of branches. Leaves are simple and shiny. The leaf tip is tapered to a point and the base is wedge shaped. The leaf stalk is 1-4 cm long. The flowers occur 20-50 together without flower stalks and in a cluster near the ends of branches. The fruit is large (9 cm across) and green. It has a very thin skin. The flesh is white. Fruit normally have 4 or 5 furrows around it. The fruit has 3-5 cells but often only one or two seeds mature. The seed is oval shaped and about 4 cm long. Fruit shape can vary; some being more round and others more elongated. The fruit are carried near the ends of the branches. The fruit has a sweet smell. Fruit quality varies significantly in size and edibility throughout the regions where the tree occurs. Good fruit have a texture like an avocado and a taste like a sweetsop but less sweet.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. Trees grow wild in coastal areas of Papua New Guinea. They are also planted. It usually grows from sea level to 500 m above sea level. It will probably grow up to about 1100 metres altitude. It occurs in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. It has been introduced to Fiji.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Trees are grown from seed. There is normally only one fertile seed in each fruit. Both domesticated and wild trees occur. Trees grow wild in coastal areas. They are also planted.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Fruiting is not seasonal although two main seasons may occur in a year. Fruit bruises easily so is hard to transport. It needs to be stored in soft containers lined with leaves or packaging. To avoid fruit damage, fruit are often harvested while not quite ripe. It can be stored for a short time if baked and is also stored in pits where it is fermented.

Planting instructions

Bukubuk

Burckella obovata

What is a Bukubuk like ?

A bukubuk fruit is a soft green fruit up to 15 cm across. The outside of the fruit has five or so large fleshy lobes. Inside there is a hard pointed seed. The flesh of the fruit is white. It has a texture and taste something like cantaloupe.

The fruit grows on a large tree which can be 36 metres high and have a trunk 2 m through. The tree often has buttresses.

The branches have lots of twigs on them and the leaves aren often crowded at the tips of these small branches. The leaves are simple, produced one after another alternatively along the branch, and they are shiny.

A white sticky sap is produced from the broken ends of twigs and leaves.

The flowers are in groups just back from the ends of the twigs. The flowers are small and white. They have 4 sepals and a corolla with 8 lobes.

Where do bukubuk's grow ?

They arwe truly tropical trees which mostly grow in the lowland rainforest. They occur as occasional trees scatterred through the rainforest, and are alos planted.

These fruit trees occur on islands such as Manus, New Britain and North Solomons, and also in other South Pacific countries such as Vanuatu.

How did it get its name?

The name Bukubuk is a Tolai word used by the people of the Gazelle Peninsula at Rabaul. As the fruit are sold in the Rabaul market, this name is also known by a number of other people. Bukubuk means lumpy, because the fruit has bumps on it. The fruit also grows in other areas of PNG and has other Tok ples names.

Scientists have given it a Latin name Burckella obovata. This is the same in all languages of the world. It belongs to a family of plants called Sapotaceae. These plants have milky sap in them.

Tok Ples names

Papua New Guinea
Province Language Tok ples name
Manus Nanat
New Ireland Natu
New Britain Kuanua Bukubuk
North Solomons

Solomon Islands
Malaita
Guadalcanal
New Georgia

NOTES

Bukubuk

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PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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