PLANT FACT SHEET

Vachellia nilotica (L.) P.J. H. Hurter & Mabb.

GENUS *Vachellia* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Egyptian thorn, Scented-pod acacia

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Pods, Seeds, Leaves, Gum, Fruit, Flowers, Vegetable, Bark - tea

The pulp in the pod is eaten. It is also boiled in water and sugar added to make a drink,
The young pods can be used as a vegetable or the seeds fried and eaten alone.
The gum is edible and used for sweets. It is mixed with sesame seeds and fried in ghee. It is eaten fresh or roasted.
It is used in the preparation of candied flowers.
The flowers are made into fritters.
A bark is used to make wine. The bark is also eaten with meat soup. It can be used to curdle milk.

DESCRIPTION

A small spiny tree. It varies a lot in details. It is mostly about 6 m high but can be 20 m high. It is often branched from the base. The crown is usually rounded. The bark is brown-black and rough. It has cracks along it. The young shoots are reddish-brown and hairy. It has thorns up to 10 cm long. The thorns often point away from the shoot tip. The leaves divide twice and are grey-green. New growth occurs in the dry season. Small glands are visible along the leaf stalk. The flowers have a scent. They are rounded heads and are bright yellow. The pods can be straight or curved. They are about 17 cm long and 2 cm wide. They are green and fleshy when young. They have a sweet smell. They are rounded at both ends. The pods turn purple-brown when mature. Gum is exuded out of the pods if they are squeezed. There are 8-15 seeds. they are flat and about 1 cm across. They are smooth and dark brown. The pods rot and do not break open. Seven subspecies have been recognised.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It is common in Africa. It grows in the Sahel and the Sahara. It grows in semi arid and arid areas. It can grow on a wide variety of soils. Near the equator is grows from 600-1800 m altitude. It is also grown in India. It can grow in arid places. It can tolerate seasonal flooding. It can withstand drought. It is highly salt tolerant.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. There are 6,000-11,000 seeds per kg. Bad and insect damaged seeds can be floated off in water. For fresh seeds, seed treatment is no necessary. For dry stored seed the hard seed coat needs to be broken. Normally this is by putting the seeds in very hot water and letting the water cool down

overnight then planting the seeds immediately. It can be done by scratching the seed. Seed stores well if kept in a cool dry insect free place.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is a reasonably fast growing tree. It can be cut back and allowed to regrow.

NOTES

There are about 1,350 Acacia species. Over 1,000 occur in Australia. Pods contain 30% tannins useful for tanning leather. The bark, leaf and gum are used for medicine. It has anticancer properties. Also as Mimosaceae.

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