PLANT FACT SHEET

Castanopsis acuminatissima (Blume) A. DC.

GENUS *Castanopsis* **FAMILY** Fagaceae

COMMON NAMES Castanopsis chestnut, White oak

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Nuts

The seeds are eaten preferably after cooking. They are boiled.
CAUTION Mouth ulcers and anaemia have been reported from eating large numbers of raw nuts. It is therefore safest to cook them. Small numbers of the nuts are eaten raw by children. Mostly the nuts are cooked and eaten. If small amounts are available they are boiled in a container. If large quantities are available they are cooked in earth ovens. Cooked they taste like rice. Pigs readily consume the nuts so people take their pigs out and tie them up under the trees in the bush during the nut season.

DESCRIPTION

This tree grows up to 40 metres tall and it can have a trunk 1 metre through at the base. Most trees have several suckers growing from their base and the roots of the tree are close to the surface. It is a widely spreading tree. The bark is quite rough and yellowish. The leaves are mainly horizontal with re-curved tips. They are rich green on the upper surface and copper brown underneath. The male and female flowers occur separately but they both occur on the one tree. The tree has flushes of growth with new leaves having a slightly reddish colour. The fruit are borne on spikes 15 to 25 cm long carried near the ends of twigs. They are covered with a prickly envelope. The nut has a spiky type of covering around it and as it ripens this peels back and the nut falls. The nut is pointed, brown and slightly hairy. It is about 1.5 cm long and has two large "seeds" inside.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It occurs throughout much of Papua New Guinea and can form pure stands in lower mountain rainforest between 500 and 2,000 m altitude. The most common place is between 1,100 and 2,300 metres above sea level but they can occur down to 500 metres in many places and are at the sea level. Often these chestnut trees are more common on the boundary between the grassland and the forest. They form a thick covering of leaves which stops many smaller plants from growing underneath. As well they commonly grow in groups or clumps made up only of chestnut trees. From planes, these Castanopsis forests can be picked out because they have a distinctive yellowish brown colour. Under the trees there is usually a thick layer of fallen leaves.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

The seeds grow easily. Self sown plants can often be found under large trees. These can be transplanted to where you want to grow a tree. A nursery can be used by planting some seeds and then transplanting them when they are big enough. Although suckers are common near the base of trees they do not grow easily.

Pollination is most probably by wind.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Nut production is seasonal. Large numbers of nuts are produced in a good season. The nut is about 1.5 cm long and pointed at the end. A nut is quite small. One nut weighs about 1 gm and the edible seed inside weighs about 0.5g.

NOTES

There are 137 Castanopsis species. 59 have been recorded as having edible nuts. The timber is a useful timber to build with.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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