PLANT FACT SHEET

Aesculus indica (Wall. ex Cambess.) Hook.

GENUS *Aesculus* **FAMILY** Sapindaceae

COMMON NAMES Indian chestnut, Indian horse chestnut

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Fruit

Caution: This plant contains saponins which although poisonous are not normally easily absorbed by the body. It is nevertheless probably not wise to eat large quantities.
The seeds are eaten cooked. Before eating they are slowly roasted then often crushed and washed for 2-5 days in running water. They are then dried and ground into a powder.
In the Himalayas the seeds are crushed and mixed with sugar.

DESCRIPTION

A tree which grows to 30 m high and spreads to 12 m wide. It forms branches low down and they extend upwards at steep angles. The bark is smooth and grey-green. The leaves open bronze, then turn dark green and finally yellow. They are divided into leaflets which spread out like fingers on a hand. The leaflets are narrow and have stalks. The flowers are white or pinkish. They occur in 12-15 cm long spikes. The fruit are pear shaped and smooth. Seeds are about 3.5 cm across. They are almost black and shiny.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It grows naturally in North-western Himalayas in wet temperate forests and shady ravines to 3,000 metres altitude. It does best on moist well drained soils. It is resistant to frosts but sensitive to drought. It does best if temperatures do not go below -5°C. It suits hardiness zones 6-9. Arboretum Tasmania.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is grown from seed. The seed need to be planted immediately after opening the nuts. Seed germinates quickly. Trees transplant fairly easily.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Mature trees yield about 60 kg of seeds per year. In NW India plants flower and fruit April to August.

NOTES

There are 15 Aesculus species.
Also put in the family Hippocastanaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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