PLANT FACT SHEET

Balanites maughamii Sprague

GENUS *Balanites* **FAMILY** Zygophyllaceae

COMMON NAMES Torchwood, Torch fruit tree

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Seeds, Seeds - oil

The fruit are eaten. They are dry and bitter.
The seeds produce an oil.

DESCRIPTION

A medium sized tree. It grows to 10-20 m tall. The tree branches about 1.8 m above the ground and has spreading branches. The trunk is 30 cm across. It has buttresses. The trunk is deeply folded. The bark is light grey and smooth. Branches which do not produce fruit have sharp thorns up to 4 cm long and then branches which produce fruit which do not have thorns. The spines are forked. The leaves on the two kinds of branches also vary. The leaves are compound with 2 leaflets on very short furry stalks. On the branches which do not produce fruit the leaves are longer. They can be 3.5-8 cm long and 6 cm wide. They are pointed. Leaves on fruiting branches have rounded ends. The flowers are small. They have a scent. They occur in small bunches. They have greenish yellow oval petals. The fruit are 5 cm long usually with 5 grooves. The outer shell is brownish-yellow. They contain a large bony stone surrounded by a thin layer of flesh. They are edible.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in sand forest. It grows in dry open bush country. It can grow in hot arid places. It is often near springs. In East Africa it grows up to 1,000 m altitude. It can grow in arid places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seeds. They are best planted where they are to grow. Root suckers can also be sued for planting.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees begin to fruit after 4 years. The seeds contain 46% edible tasteless oil.

NOTES

The fruit kill snails which spread Bilharzia.

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