



PLANT FACT SHEET

Piliostigma thonningii (Schumach.) Milne-Redh.

GENUS *Piliostigma* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Camel's foot leaf tree

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Pods, Seeds, Leaves, Fruit, Bark, Vegetable, Flowers

The pods and seeds are eaten when food is scarce. They are dried.

The young leaves are chewed to relieve thirst. The leaves are also cooked and eaten. The sour shoots are used in porridge or chewed raw.

The bark can be used to make tea.

The dried leaves are used for tea.

DESCRIPTION

It is a leafy shrub or a spreading tree. It loses its leaves during the year. It can grow to 12 m tall. The leaves are broad and lobed. The bark is rough and brown. The leaves are simple and can be 20 cm across. The tip of the leaf has lobes and the base of the leaf has notches. The veins spread out from this notch. The upper surface of the leaf is green and the lower surface a lighter colour and with red veins. The leaves are on thick stalks. The male and female flowers are carried separately. The male heads have fewer flowers than the female. The flower buds are fat and oval. They are velvety and in long strings on sturdy stalks. The flowers are 2.5 cm wide. Only one or two flowers open at one time in a bunch. They hang downwards and drop off easily. The pods are large and woody. They are up to 23 cm long by 8 cm wide. They are green but turn brown. They are covered with tiny raised lines. The pods do not break open but fall off. The pods and seeds are edible

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in open woodland and often near streams. It grows in the Sahel. In Ethiopia it grows at low and medium altitudes especially between 900-1,700 m altitude. It cannot stand cold temperatures or frost and is tolerant of drought. It grows in areas with an annual rainfall between 400-1,200 mm. It can grow in arid places. It also grows on termite mounds. It grows in the lowlands. It grows in Miombo woodland in Africa.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seeds. The seeds are removed from a dry pod by breaking it open with a hammer. The seeds are put in hot water and soaked overnight. Then they are planted. Seeds germinate in 5-10 days.

Seedlings are transplanted when the first adult leaves appear.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It grows slowly. Fruit are produced during the rainy season.

NOTES

Also as Caesalpinaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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