PLANT FACT SHEET

Erythrina variegata L.

GENUS *Erythrina* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Indian coral tree, Coral Tree

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

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

The young leaves are eaten cooked. They are added to soups, stews and curries.
The seeds are eaten after boiling or roasting. The young tender pods are boiled and eaten.
The roots of seedlings less than 45 cm high are roasted and eaten.
CAUTION Some similar coral trees contain alkaloids and are used as medicine. The seeds are poisonous raw.

DESCRIPTION

A deciduous tree. It grows up to 15-20 m tall and loses its leaves for part of the year. The trunk has blunt spines. The branches are spreading, crooked and armed with sharp black prickles. The leaves have 3 leaflets. The leaflets are broadly oval and 8 to 18 cm long. They are shiny green on top and dull flat green underneath. The flowers appear before the leaves. The flowers are at the ends of branches and are hairy and dense. The flowers are large numerous and hang down. They are red. The pod is about 10 to 25 cm long and 1.5 to 2 cm across. The pod is constricted between the beans. Seeds are dark red.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is native from India to the Philippines and the Pacific. It mostly grows naturally along the dunes very close to the coast but is transplanted as an ornamental. It will grow up to 900 m altitude. It has been recorded up to 2,200 m above sea level in PNG. It is tolerant to salt. It can tolerate drought. It needs full sun. It can grow in a wide range of soils and soil pH values from 4.5-8.0. It is a nitrogen fixing tree so can grow on poor soils. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 11-12. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Trees can be grown from seed. Seed will remain viable for several years. Trees do not breed true from seed. Cuttings also grow easily. Large cuttings can be used.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is fast growing. It can grow 1.5 m each year. Trees can live for 100 years.

NOTES

There are 108 Erythrina species.

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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