PLANT FACT SHEET

Phoenix reclinata Jacq.

GENUS *Phoenix* **FAMILY** Arecaceae

COMMON NAMES Senegal date palm

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Cabbage, Fruit, Sap, Seeds - coffee, Palm heart, Vegetable, Bud

The sap of the fruit stalk is tapped to make an alcoholic drink. Caution: Alcohol is a cause of cancer.
The fruit can be eaten when ripe. The green fruit are immersed in water for a few hours and they then become bright red and their pulp becomes sweet and edible.
The end leaf bud is eaten as a vegetable.
The seeds are used as a coffee substitute. The seed kernel is used in cereal based preparations.

DESCRIPTION

A palm. It can be a stemless suckering bush or have a ring of suckers around the base. It often grows 3-6 m high but can be 10-25 m high. It can also be a many stemmed clump. The old stems hang over then curve upwards near the end. The trunk can be 30 cm across. The leaves are long and hang over. They are feather-shaped and 3-4 m long. There are up to 50 leaflets on each side of the leaf stalk and these are narrow and pointed. The lowermost leaflets are reduced to spines. The flowers are of separate sexes on separate trees. The male and female flowers are borne in long bunches. They are small and cream coloured. The male flowers are cup-shaped and the female flowers are round. The female flowers produce yellow fruit. The fruit are oval and 1-1.5 cm long. The flesh is edible when ripe.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It suits damp spots in tropical and warm places. It grows in the lowlands and the highlands. They are often along river banks in low-lying open grassland. It can adapt to a wide range of conditions. In Madagascar it grows from sea level to 3300 m altitude. In Kenya it grows from sea level to 2,600 m altitude. It is salt tolerant. It can grow in arid places. In Melbourne Botanical Gardens. It suits plant hardiness zones 9-11. In Townsville palmetum.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are easily grown from seed. The seed should be cleaned of all flesh. They are then best soaked before planting. They transplant easily. They can also be grown from suckers.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Growth of seedlings in fast. The sap flow increases to the flower stalk just before flowering. This can be tapped. The ripening clusters of fruit can be harvested by cutting. The fruit weigh 0.4 g.

NOTES

There are 17 Phoenix species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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