PLANT FACT SHEET

Dimocarpus longan Lour.

GENUS *Dimocarpus* **FAMILY** Sapindaceae

COMMON NAMES Longan

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Leaves - tea, Seeds

The fruit is eaten raw or cooked.
They can be dried and stored or preserved canned in syrup.

DESCRIPTION

A tree up to 12-40 m high with a low trunk and spreading branches. The tree has a rounded crown. It keeps its leaves throughout the year. The trunk can be 80 cm across. There can be buttresses 2 m tall. The bark is corky. The twigs have 5 faint grooves. The leaves are 3-45 cm long by 1.8-20 cm wide. The leaves have petioles and six to nine leaflets. Leaflets are up to 12 cm long. Young leaflets are often red before turning green. The flowers occur in upright clusters. These are 8-40 cm long. They are produced on new growth. The flowers are small and reddish-brown. A progression of male, female and hermaphrodite flowers occur. Flowers are pollinated by insects. The fruit is similar to a litchi and about 2.5 cm across. They are yellow-brown when mature and with a pebbly surface. They occur in clusters of 10 to 80. The flesh or aril is white and sweet. The seed is small, round and brownish-black. There are several named cultivated varieties.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It will grow in poorer soils and colder conditions than a litchi. It can stand frost and needs a period of cool temperature to fruit well. So they suit a subtropical to warm temperate climate, but will also grow in the lowland tropics. The chilling requirement is less than litchi which means it will fruit in more tropical areas. It does best with temperatures between 19-26°C. They can tolerate wind but drying winds at flowering affect fruit set. Excessive rainfall during flowering reduces fruit set. It suits monsoonal regions with a distinct wet and dry season. They can tolerate flooding for a few days. A rainfall of 1,500-2,000 mm is best. A pH of 4.5-6 is best. In XTBG Yunnan. At ECHO. It suits hardiness zones 11-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Seedlings do not produce true to type and take up to 20 years to fruit. So air layered or grafted plants are used and these fruit in 3-4 years. For air layering, mature shoots about 2-3 cm across are chosen which do not have active vegetative growth. A ring is cut around the twig 50 cm from the tip removing the bark and soft wood. A plastic sleeve is put over the twig and tied below the cut ring. Then peat moss or rooting mix is filled into the sleeve and this is tied off above the ring. When roots have formed the twig is cut off and planted. Cuttings and

budding can also be used. Spacing needs to be 5-8 m apart. Deep rooting needs to be encouraged by good site preparation. This stops trees being blown over. Wind protection is essential. Although flowers need to be cross pollinated, this can be done between flowers on the same tree as flowers develop at different times. Very little pruning should be done. Fruit need to ripen on the tree. They do not ripen further after harvest.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Seedlings grow slowly at first, but then grow more rapidly. Trees fruit after 7-10 years from seed and 3-5 years from vegetative plants. Up to 40 to 55 kg of fruit per tree are possible. Fruit mature in 120-150 days. Fruit can be stored for 6 weeks at 5°C when covered. Trees can live for 400 years.

NOTES

There are 6 Dimocarpus species. Fruit are high in folates 68µg/100.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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