PLANT FACT SHEET

Corypha utan Lam.

GENUS *Corypha* **FAMILY** Arecaceae

COMMON NAMES Corypha palm, Sugar palm

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Starch, seeds, Cabbage, Sap, Sago, Nuts, Palm heart, bud

The starch extracted from the stem is edible.
The palm cabbage or bud can be eaten raw or cooked.
The sap can be collected from the flower stalk and made into sugar or toddy.
The kernels of the young fruit can be eaten raw.

DESCRIPTION

The largest and most stately member of the palm family. It is tall and single stemmed. It grows to 20 m high. The trunk can be 1 m across. The bark is smooth, grey, and has rings around it. The leaves are very large and fan shaped. The leaves are rounded, and the blade can up to 3 m long by 3 m across. The leaf is deeply divided from about half way up, into many pointed lobes. The leaf stalk is 2-4 m long. The leaf stalks and leaf edges are armed with very hard, large, black spines. The flowers are small and cream-green. They are about 5-8 mm across. They occur in groups of 6-20, in flower clusters 2-5 m long near the top of the palm. The fruit are smooth and almost round. They are 2-3 cm across. They are green, and turn brown when ripe. The fruit contain a single, hard-shelled, seed. The palm flowers once, then dies.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It grows along the edges of tidal rivers. They are often on heavy soils on flood plains which flood. It grows best with access to ground water. They are very common and widely distributed at low and medium altitudes from northern Luzon to Sulu in the Philippines. It is frost tender when young. It needs a warm sunny position and a well drained soil. In Indonesia it grows up to 200 m above sea level. In Papua New Guinea it grows in the Western Province. It suits hardiness zones 11-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Seed can take 18 months to germinate. Fresh seed germinate more quickly. They can germinate in less than one month. Seedlings are difficult to transplant.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Seedlings are very slow growing. After 40-50 years it flowers, then the leaves and palm die. So each plant can only have its sap tapped once in a lifetime. The cabbage can be removed before the palm dies.

NOTES

There are 8 Corypha species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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