PLANT FACT SHEET

Bauhinia variegata L.

GENUS *Bauhinia* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Pink Orchid Tree, Mountain ebony

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Flowers, Leaves, Buds, Fruit, Pods, Seeds, Gum

The flowers are used in pickles and curry. They are dried.
They are edible when fried.
The young leaves, flowers and fruit (pods) are boiled and cooked as a vegetable. They are also used in relish and chutney.
The seeds are eaten after roasting.

DESCRIPTION

A tree. It loses its leaves during the dry season of the year. It grows to a height of 8-12 m tall and spreads to 5 m across. The stem is erect and straight. The leaves are entire to the midpoint, then divided into 2 lobes. The leaves are 10-20 cm long and 10-15 cm across. The base of the leaves is heart shaped. They are dull blue-green. The veins radiate from the base of the leaf. The leaf stalk is 2-3 cm long. The flowers are pink to purple with 5 club-shaped petals. One petal is a different shape and colour. They are produced on stalks around a flowering stalk at the end of branches. The flowers are 8-12 cm across. The fruit are pods. They are 20-30 cm long and 1.5-2.5 cm wide. They are flat and brown and twist as they open. There are 10-15 seeds. The seeds are round and flat and 1 cm across.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. The minimum temperature is 7°C. They cannot tolerate salt spray. It grows naturally in deciduous forest between 500 and 1500 m altitude. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 9-10. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from treated seed. Fresh seeds do not need to be treated, but stored seed do. They are put into hot water then left overnight before planting. (There are 4,200-5,700 seed per kg.) Seeds germinate in about 3 weeks. It can be grown by air-layering and grafting.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees are fairly fast growing. Trees produce flowers when 3 years old.

NOTES

There are about 250-350 Bauhinia species. Most are in the tropics. It can become invasive. Also as Caesalpinaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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