PLANT FACT SHEET

Balanites wilsoniana Dawe & Sprague

GENUS *Balanites* **FAMILY** Zygophyllaceae

COMMON NAMES Torchwood

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Nuts, Fruit, Oil

The seed kernel is edible. They are boiled cut thinly and then soaked in running water to remove bitterness. The seeds are the source of a clear oil similar to olive oil. The seeds are pounded and boiled in water then allowed to cool and the oil skimmed off.
The fruit are eaten occasionally.

DESCRIPTION

A large tree. It grows to 35 m high. The trunk can be 3 m around. There are buttresses. Young trees have long branched spines. The bark is thin and yellow or greenish-grey. The non flowering branches have spines. There are no spines on the flowering branches. The leaves have 2 leaflets. The leaflets are 5-13 cm long by 3.5-7 cm wide. The leaf stalk is 10-25 mm long. The stalks of the leaflets are 5-15 mm long. The flowers are in clusters. They are produced above the leaf axils. The flowers are green with long hairs on the inner surface. The fruit are oval and 4-10 cm long by 3-5 cm wide. They are yellow when ripe. There is a single seed encased in a hard stone.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It grows in lowland rainforest. It suits humid locations. In Tanzania it grows between sea level and 400 m above sea level. In Nigeria it grows up to 1200 m above sea level. It grows in areas with a rainfall between 1,000-1,800 mm. It can tolerate a range of soils but is best in rich loams.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seeds or root suckers.

Harvesting and Seed Production

In Tanzania fruit are collected between August and October. Seed can be stored for months.

NOTES

The fruit pulp kill the snails that spread Bilharzia.

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