PLANT FACT SHEET

Use with caution

This plant can be harmful if it is eaten raw, in large amounts or without the right preparation. Read the whole fact sheet before use.

Gymnocladus dioicus (L.) K. Koch.

GENUS *Gymnocladus* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Kentucky Coffee tree, Chicot, Nicker-tree, Stump tree

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds - coffee

The fully ripe seeds have been roasted and ground as coffee. They need to be roasted for at least 3 hours at 285°C to remove the hydrocyanic acid.
The pods are preserved like tamarind.
CAUTION: The raw seeds have toxic properties. They contain the alkaloid cystisine.

DESCRIPTION

A tree. It grows to 21 m high and 15 m wide. The trunk can be 60 cm across. It loses its leaves for much of the year. The leaves are large and compound. They are 1 m long. Young leaves are pinkish bronze. The leaf is made up of about 70 leaflets on 3-7 pairs of branches. The leaflets are oval and 5 cm long. The flowers are small, greenish-white and star shaped. They have a scent. They occur as many branched clusters at the ends of branches. The plants are separately male and female. They are pollinated by insects. Female plants produce fruit as reddish brown pods which hang down. The pods can be 25 cm long. The husk is hard and leathery. The seeds are about 2 cm long and slightly flattened. There are only a few seeds in each pod. They are in a sticky sweet pulp. The seeds have been roasted and ground as coffee.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It is native to C. & E. United States. It grows from 90-600 m altitude. It grows best in deep rich soils. It can tolerate severe climates. It can grow in a range of soils. It suits hardiness zones 4-8. Arboretum Tasmania.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. The tough seed coat must be broken to allow water to enter before seed can germinate. It can also be grown from shoots from the roots.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is slow growing. Trees can live for 75 years.

NOTES

There are only 2 Gymnocladus species.
Also as Caesalpinaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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ONLINE FACT SHEET https://www.echocommunity.org/en/resources/79e530d8-71d5-4627-b193-6440aa48b4ec