PLANT FACT SHEET

Senna bicapsularis (L.) Roxby

GENUS *Senna* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Christmas senna tree, Rambling cassia

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Leaves, Vegetable, Seeds - coffee, Seeds - oil

The fruit are eaten raw. The pulp of the pod is sweet and like tamarind.
The leaves are gathered, then chopped and wilted and cooked as a vegetable.
The seeds are roasted and pounded and used as a substitute for coffee.

DESCRIPTION

A herb or shrub. It is spreading and scrambling. It can grow 2-9 m high. The leaves are green and feather like. The leaves are compound with leaflets along the stalk. There are 2-6 pairs of rounded leaflets. It has oval leaflets 2-4 cm long. The flowers are pale yellow and very large. The stamens inside the flower are curled. The flowers occur in large sprays at the ends of branches. The fruit are a smooth pod 11 cm long and 1 cm wide.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It is invasive of scrub and waste places. It is native of tropical America and now distributed throughout the tropics. It grows between sea level and 2,130 m above sea level. In Tanzania it grows from sea level to 2,100 m above sea level and in areas with a rainfall between 1,100-1,800 mm. It can grow in arid places. It occurs in the West Indies and South America as well as other parts of the tropics. It grows from 1,000-1,900 m altitude in Ethiopia. It grows on light to medium soils. It grows in open sunny positions and on well drained soils. It is drought and frost tender.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seeds. Seed need to have the hard seed coat broken. It can be used as a hedge.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Leaves are collected during the early rainy season.

NOTES

There are 100 Cassia species. This group has been revised to a smaller more consistent group.
Also as Caesalpinaceae.

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