PLANT FACT SHEET

Vitex payos (Lour.) Merrill

GENUS *Vitex* **FAMILY** Lamiaceae

COMMON NAMES Chocolate berry, Golden vitex

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit

The ripe fruit are eaten. They have a coffee-like flavour.
They are also used for drinks.

DESCRIPTION

A small to medium sized tree. It grows 4-10 m tall. The crown is rounded. The bark is grey to brown. There are cracks along its length. Young parts of the plant are covered with light brown woolly hairs. The leaves have 5 leaflets. (Sometimes there are 3 or 4). The leaflets are broadly oval and 11 cm long by 6 cm wide. They are bright green and finely hairy. The edges are often thickened and rolled under. The leaf stalk can be 12 cm long. The flowers are white to dark mauve and 6 mm long. They have 2 lips. The lower lip is mauve and upper one white. The occur in small heads made up of a few flowers. They are on a common stalk 7 cm long. The fruit are oval and 1.5-2 cm long. They are black when mature. There is a cup at the base. The fruit are edible.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It occurs in open woodland and on rocky outcrops at medium to low altitudes. In Kenya it grows from sea level to 1,600 m altitude. It is usually in more arid zones. It is often on sandy soils. It can grow in arid places. It suits the seasonally dry tropics.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It can be grown from ripe seed.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It grows fairly quickly. The mature green fruit can be covered in ash to encourage ripening.

NOTES

Also put in the family Verbenaceae.

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