PLANT FACT SHEET

Vitex ferruginea Schumach. et Thonn.

GENUS *Vitex* **FAMILY** Lamiaceae

COMMON NAMES Plum vitex, Plum fingerleaf

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit

The fruit are eaten raw. They are sweet. The stone is discarded.

DESCRIPTION

A shrub or tree. Often it loses its leaves during the year. It can grow from 4 m tall to 13 m tall. The trunk is slightly fluted. The small branches have rusty brown hairs. The bark is smooth and light grey. It can have small grooves and small pieces flaking off with age. The leaves are compound with 3-7 leaflets arranged like the fingers on a hand. They occur opposite one another along the stem. The leaflets are unequal in size. The largest leaflet is 5-14 cm long with a long pointed tip. The upper surface is dull with a few hairs while the lower surface has rusty hairs and clear veins. The leaf stalk is 12 cm long while the leaflet stalks are 1 cm long. The flowers are in dense heads beside the leaves. The flower stalk is 5 cm long. The flowers are small and like tubes. They are 1 cm long and have one blue-violet lobe and four white petals. The fruit is rounded and fleshy. It is green with white spots. Fruit turn shiny black when ripe. They are 4 cm long and edible.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is often in shallow soils near rivers and lakes. It grows from sea level to 610 m above sea level. It grows in lowland forests. It grows in the understorey and on the edge of forest.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. The seed are sown directly where they are to grow. For seed collection the whole fruit is dried then the dry pulp shaken off leaving the seed. Seed should be stored in a cool dry place. Trees can be topped or cut back and allowed to regrow.

Harvesting and Seed Production

In Tanzania fruit are collected from April to June.

NOTES

Also put in the family Verbenaceae.

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