PLANT FACT SHEET

Caryota rumphiana Becc

GENUS *Caryota* **FAMILY** Arecaceae

COMMON NAMES Fishtail palm

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Pith, Starch, Fruit, Cabbage, Growing tip

The pith of the young trunk is eaten (Heart cabbage)
The trunk is sometimes used to pound for sago starch.
The trunk is also used to cultivate sago grubs.
The fruit are eaten after a long time of boiling.
CAUTION The juice of the fruit can irritate the skin

DESCRIPTION

A spineless palm with delta shaped leaflets. It grows to a height of 18 m and spreads to 5 m across. The stem is slender and erect. The leaflets are bipinnate (Two branches on the leaves) and the whole leaf is up to 5-6 m long and 3-4 m wide. The leaves have irregular teeth on the edges towards the top. The leaves arch over. The flowers are purple and yellow-green. They occur on long spikes. These can be 3 m long. These fruiting stalks are stout. Long chains of fruit hang from near the leaves along this stalk. The fruit are bluish. The fruit irritate the skin of people.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. The palm is common and widespread at low elevations in Papua New Guinea. It grows up to at least 1200 m altitude. It will grow on most soils. It needs a protected, warm, moist position. It is sensitive to frost. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It grows wild. It can be grown from seeds. Seed need to be sown while fresh. Seed can take 6-12 months to germinate.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Using the cabbage or growing tip kills the palm.

NOTES

There are 12 Caryota species. They are tropical. Caution: The sap from the fruit contains irritant crystals.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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