PLANT FACT SHEET

Citrus australasica F. Muell.

GENUS *Citrus* **FAMILY** Rutaceae

COMMON NAMES Finger lime, Australian Finger Lime

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit

The fruit can be used fresh or for processing into jams, jellies, marmalade etc.

DESCRIPTION

A shrub or small tree. It grows up to 4-8 m high and spreads 2-5 m across. The bark is dark green. Young growth is often pinkish. The branches are thorny. The leaves are 2-4 cm long by 0.5-1.5 cm wide. They are oval or sword shaped. They are dark green and glossy but paler underneath. The edges of the leaves can be entire, scalloped or have teeth. The tip is blunt. The flowers occur singly in the axils of leaves. They are white or pinkish and about 1.2 cm across. Fruit occur on the previous seasons growth. Fruit are long and finger shaped. They are about 6-12 cm by 1.2-2.4 cm. Fruit colour can be yellow, red, black, or green. The pulp of the fruit is most commonly red but can be yellow or green. The fruit have 5-7 sections. These cells burst open with pressure.

HABITAT

It occurs naturally in Australia in Northen New South Wales and Southern Queensland. It grows in subtropical rainforest as an understorey tree. It grows on a range of soil types. It can tolerate light frosts. In Brisbane Botanical Gardens. It suits hardiness zones 10-11. Mt Cootha Botanical Gardens. Arboretum Tasmania.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed. Seed germination is erratic. Seeds do not breed true to type and seed from one plant can give a range of fruit colours. They can be grown from cuttings on a heat bed but rooting is slow and can take 6 months. They can be budded onto citrus rootstocks. Because the buds are small this takes some skill to be successful.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants are slow growing. Seedling trees do not bear true to type. The entire range of fruit colours can develop from seed from a single fruit. Seedling trees can take 5 to 17 years to produce fruit. Flowering and fruiting can occur several times throughout the year. Up to 186 g of fruit per tree have been harvested from wild trees. Fruit from natural populations vary considerably in shape, size, colour, seediness and acidity. A fruit weighs about 7-42 g at maturity.

NOTES

They contain up to 82 mg of Vitamin C per 100 g of raw material. There are 5 Microcitrus species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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