PLANT FACT SHEET

Encephalartos hildebrandtii A. Braun & C. D. Bouche

GENUS *Encephalartos* **FAMILY** Zamiaceae

COMMON NAMES Kaffir Bread, Hottentot bread, Mombasa cycad

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Sago from stems, Pith, Fruit

Flour is prepared from the seeds after they have been boiled and dried.
Caution: The seeds are eaten as a famine food but are reported to cause liver cancer.
The starch of the trunk can be extracted and used for food. It is chopped and heaped for a week to allow fermentation then it is washed in hot water and sun dried before pounding into flour and using in porridge.

DESCRIPTION

A medium to large sized cycad. The trunk can be 6 m tall. There are new suckers near the base. The young leaves are reddish or brown. They have fine hairs. The mature leaves form a rounded crown. They are 2-3 m long by 30-60 cm wide. The leaf stalk is 2-7 cm long and it is swollen at the base. The leaflets are narrow and the lower leaflets from short spines. The cones are different. The male cones are 20-50 cm long by 5-9 cm wide. They are greenish yellow and with 3-8 on each stem. The fruit stalks are 5-25 cm long. The female cones are 28-60 cm long by 15-25 cm wide. They are barrel shaped and there are 2-4 on each stem. The fruit stalks are 4-6 cm long. The seeds are 3-3.8 cm long by 1.5-2 cm wide. They can be red, yellow or orange and are angular.

HABITAT

They suit tropical and subtropical climates. They need a sunny position and good drainage. They cannot tolerate frost. It grows in sparse deciduous forests and in grassland. They grow from sea level to 600 m altitude. They grow in regions with hot humid summer climates and mild dry winter climates. These places have a summer rainfall of 1000-1400 mm per year. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed or by removal of suckers. Suckers transplant easily.

NOTES

There are 52 Encephalartos species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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