PLANT FACT SHEET

Pentaclethra macrophylla Benth.

GENUS *Pentaclethra* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Oil Bean Tree, Owala oil

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Seeds - oil

The seeds (with skin removed) are soaked in water, then ground and cooked in leaves. They are also shredded and fermented. This is done to remove toxins. Sometimes they are boiled or roasted for 12 hours.
The seeds are rich in oil. This is used in cooking. (Some references say not for cooking).
The seeds are used as a condiment.

DESCRIPTION

A large tree. It grows to 6-30 m high. The crown is spreading. The leaves are twice divided. There are 12-20 pairs of secondary leaflets. The flowers are in groups 30 cm long in the axils of leaves or at the ends of branches. The fruit are long pods. They can be 40-60 cm long and 5-10 cm wide. There are 5-8 oval, flat seeds. These are 4-7 cm long by 2-3 cm wide. They are purplish brown.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in tropical Africa. It grows from sea level to 500 m altitude. It needs temperatures above 18°C. An average temperature of 25°C and a rainfall between 1,500-2,000 mm per year is best. It is best on a well-drained soil but can tolerate waterlogging. It can grow in acid soils. It can grow in arid places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Fresh seed should be used. Soaking in water for 24 hours improves germination. Seed can be stored for 3 months at 15°C. It can be grown from cuttings, air-layering or budding. Young stem cuttings need to be used and using rooting hormone helps. Plants can be budded.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees from cuttings can produce seed after 4 years. Harvesting pods can occur throughout the year but is a difficult task. In Liberia the seeds are produced from December to March. In Central African Republic plants have been recorded flowering in March and April.

NOTES

The oil from the seeds is used for cooking and lamps. It contains an alkaloid paucine. Also as Mimosaceae.

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