PLANT FACT SHEET

Ficus sycomorus L.

GENUS *Ficus* **FAMILY** Moraceae

COMMON NAMES Sycamore fig

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Leaves, Vegetable, Bark, Gum

The ripe fruit are eaten raw. They can also be dried. They are used for jam.
They are eaten with millet and used to make an alcoholic drink. Caution: Alcohol is a cause of cancer.
Young leaves are cooked for food. They are used in soups or peanut dishes.
The latex is used as a vegetable rennet.

DESCRIPTION

A fig. It is a deciduous tree. It grows to 13-25 m high and spreads to 14 m across. It has a rounded crown. The stem is erect. Sometimes the stem has buttresses. The base of the tree commonly spreads over the ground. The bark is yellowish. The leaves are olive green, oval or almost round. They are 5-12 cm long and 3-10 cm wide. The leaves are rough and leathery. They are hairy. The edge of the leaf is wavy and roughly toothed. The leaf stalk is 3 cm long. In dry seasons the tree may lose its leaves. The flowers are 2 cm across and roundish. The fruit are small and edible. They are 3 cm across. They grow in dense clusters in the axils of leaves or on main branches and on the trunk. The fruit are yellow-red when ripe.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. They will grow on most soils. Soils need to be well drained. They prefer a sunny open position. It is drought and frost resistant. It is probably damaged by frost when in leaf. It can grow in hot and arid regions. It grows well near rivers. In Africa trees are commonly near rivers in dry regions. It grows in areas with an annual rainfall between 200-1,800 mm. It can grow in salty soils. It can grow in arid places. It grows in Miombo woodland in Africa. It grows in the Sahel. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

In the Mediterranean region sycamore figs do not set seed because the more tropical fig wasp does not occur there. In tropical places it can be grown from seeds. It can be grown by cuttings or layering. Trees can be pruned or lopped.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees are fairly fast growing. The young fruit are gashed to assist ripening.
In Tanzania fruit are collected at the end of the rainy season.

NOTES

Biblical references Amos 7:14 There are about 800-1000 Ficus species. They are mostly in the tropics. There are 120 Ficus species in tropical America.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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