PLANT FACT SHEET

Morus alba L.

GENUS *Morus* **FAMILY** Moraceae

COMMON NAMES Mulberry, White mulberry

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Fruit, Seeds, Flowers, Bark, Leaves - tea, Manna, Vegetable

The fruit is eaten raw or used in juice, stews and tarts. The fruit can be dried and stored. The fruit can be processed for vinegar or wine.
The leaves are edible. They can be put in stews. The leaves can be used for tea. The leaves are used for sarma in Turkey. They are rolled around a filling of rice or minced meat.
(Leaves are also used for silk worms.)
The bark can be roasted and ground into a flour. The tree also yields an edible manna.
NOTE The stain from the fruit can be removed by rubbing with an unripe fruit.

DESCRIPTION

A small tree up to 9 m high but it can grow to 20 m tall. Often it is low and spreading. It has dark green toothed leaves. The leaves vary considerably in shape even on the one tree. They can be oval, heart shaped or 3 lobed and 5-15 cm long. The tip is pointed and the leaf is on a stalk 5 cm long. The upper surface is smooth but there can be some hairs on the veins underneath. Male and female flowers occur separately either on the same or separate plants. The flowers are greenish and in spikes which droop down. The fruit is a dark red or black berry but pale kinds also occur. The fruit is about 2 cm long.

HABITAT

It is native to N. China. A warm temperate plant. The white mulberry (Morus alba) is normally used for silk worms and the black mulberry suits more highland regions. The normal range is 700 to 2200 m altitude in the tropics. In India it grows to 3,300 m altitude. Once established it can tolerate heat and drought. Hobart Botanical Gardens. It is winter hardy and can tolerate salt. It can grow in arid places. It grows in Miombo woodland in Africa. It suits hardiness zones 4-10. Arboretum Tasmania. In Yunnan. In Sichuan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed but seed are slow to germinate. If seed are used they should be soaked in cold water for 48 hours. Trees from seeds take a long time to bear. It is better to grow trees from cuttings. Trees can also be grown by grafting. Because trees "bleed" it is best not to do too much pruning but trees can be topped or trained.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Cuttings produce fruit in 3 years while it takes 5-8 years for seedling trees. Fruit is produced seasonally. The fruit season is normally September to December in the southern hemisphere.

NOTES

There are about 13 Morus species. They grow in temperate areas and in mountains in the tropics. Chemical composition (leaves): Ash = 10% (very rich in lime). Small amount of Vitamin C. Much carbohydrate. Also contains tannin, carotene, fat, and nitrogenous matter.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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