PLANT FACT SHEET

Castanea dentata (Marshall) Borkh.

GENUS *Castanea* **FAMILY** Fagaceae

COMMON NAMES American chestnut, American sweet chestnut

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Nuts, Seeds

The nuts are eaten raw or roasted. They can be pureed and added to stuffings or bread.
The roasted nuts can be used as a coffee substitute.
The kernels have also been used as a chocolate substitute.

DESCRIPTION

A large tree. It grows up to 35 m high. The trunk can be 100 cm across. The tree loses its leaves during the year. The leaves are alternate and simple. They taper gradually to both ends. They are 15-28 cm long. The leaves are yellowish green. There are 15-20 parallel veins on each side of the leaf. These end in a tooth with a bristle. The flowers are separately male and female on the same tree. The male or pollen flowers are on short stalks in erect catkins. These are 12-20 cm long. They are in the axils of leaves. The female or seed flowers occur singly or in clusters or 2 or 3 at the base of some of the male flowers. The fruit is a nut. These occur in small clusters of 1-5 within a spiny husk. This is 5-8 cm across and splits into 4 parts. Each but is oval and flat on one side. It is pointed. The surface is brown and smooth. The nuts are edible.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It is native to eastern North America. It can grow on a variety of sites. It does best on well drained sands and gravels. It suits hardiness zones 4-9.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed. Seedlings need transplanting very early. It can also be grown by layering.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Production has been seriously affected by chestnut blight Endothia parasitica.

NOTES

All Castanea bear edible nuts. There are about 12 Castanea species. It has been badly affected by chestnut blight (Cyphonectria parasitica).

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