PLANT FACT SHEET

Commiphora africana (A. Rich.) Engl.

GENUS *Commiphora* **FAMILY** Burseraceae

COMMON NAMES African myrrh

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Roots, Leaves, Bark, Gum, Seeds

The centre of the roots is eaten when food is scarce. It is eaten raw. It is sweet. It is also chewed and the juice swallowed.
Bark is used to make a tea.
The young fruit is eaten raw. The gum is also eaten raw and is sweet.
Caution: The leaves are eaten but may contain poisons. They are cooked with potash and groundnuts.

DESCRIPTION

A shrub or small tree. It grows 2-5 m high. It has many branches and is spiny. The trunk is grey and the bark does not peel. The young branches are densely hairy and with spines at the tip. The leaves are on long hairy stalks. The leaves are made up of 3-5 leaflets. These are usually hairy and have rounded teeth along the edge. The leaflet at the end has a narrow base and blunt point. It is the largest leaflet. The flowers are red and in short clusters in the axils of leaves. The flowers are produced before the leaves appear. The fruit are small and round. In fresh fruit the layer around the seed is red.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It favours low dry woodland. It grows on sandy flats or rocky ridges. In East Africa it grows between 50 and 1,800 m altitude. In Kenya it grows in regions with a rainfall between 400-1,000 m altitude. It can grow in arid places. It grows in the Sahel. It grows in Miombo woodland. In Brisbane Botanical Gardens.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It can be grown from seeds or cuttings. It can be grown from stakes. It can be planted as a live hedge.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It flowers and fruit throughout much of the year in Ethiopia. The rootstock is collected during the rainy season.

NOTES

There are about 165-190 Commiphora species. They are common in Africa.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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