PLANT FACT SHEET

Attalea cohune Mart.

GENUS *Attalea* **FAMILY** Arecaceae

COMMON NAMES Cohune Nut

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Cabbage, seeds, Oil, Fruit, Palm heart, Nuts, Vegetable

The young leaf buds are cooked and eaten as a vegetable.
The nuts yield an oil which can substitute for coconut oil. The kernels are removed from the shell.
The oil is used in margarine and for baking and in biscuits.

DESCRIPTION

A tall solitary palm. It can grow up to 15-30 m tall. The trunk is grey and scarred. It is 30-40 cm across. Often the leaf bases remain attached to younger plants. The crown is very large. The fronds are held stiffly erect. The leaves are 10 m long and 2 m across. The leaf stalks have very broad bases. The leaves are dark green and have leaflets along the stalk. The leaflets are broad and long. They are crowded along the midrib. They are carried in various planes. The flowering stalk is carried among the leaf bases. It is 1-1.5 cm long. There are many flowers. It bears large clusters of fruit that look like small coconuts. They are egg shaped. They are 6 cm long.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It does best in the hot humid lowland tropics. It grows at low elevations in Central America. It suits hardiness zones 9-12. It needs regular moisture and humidity. It needs fertile, well drained soil. It needs full sun. In Cairns Botanical Gardens. In Townsville palmetum.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Seed germinate readily. They take 2 months to germinate. Young plants can withstand direct sun.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Nuts are often collected after they fall. The nut has a hard shell. There is a machine capable of breaking 100 tons of fruit per day. The palm heart is usually taken from a 7-10 year old palm. One palm can yield 250 kg of nuts per year.

NOTES

There are between (22) 30-71 Attalea species. Some authorities divide them among Attalea, Orbignya, Scheela and Maximiliana. Cohune oil is used as a lubricant.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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