PLANT FACT SHEET

Fagus grandifolia Ehrh.

GENUS *Fagus* **FAMILY** Fagaceae

COMMON NAMES American beech, Beech mast

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Bark, Nuts, Seeds, Leaves

The nut is eaten raw and also roasted. They can be ground and made into flour. The seed coat is removed. It yields an attractive oil. This can be used for cooking.
The expanding leaves can be cooked as a potherb.
The germinating seeds can be eaten raw or cooked.
Roasted seeds are roasted as a coffee substitute.

DESCRIPTION

A medium sized tree. It grows to 25 m high. It spreads 10 m wide. The trunk is 100 cm across. It loses its leaves during the year. The leaves are alternate and simple. They are narrowly oval and have teeth along the edge. The tip has a long point and the base is wedge shaped. The upper surface is dark bluish-green and it is paler underneath. The male and female flowers are separate but on the same tree. The male or pollen flowers are in ball like clusters at the end of long branches which hang down. The female or seed flowers are in small clusters of 2-4 in the axils of leaves. The fruit are nuts. They are edible. They usually occur in pairs in bristly red husk. This opens in 4 parts. Each nut is like a sharp 3 sided pyramid. They are 18-22 mm long. They ripen and are shed in autumn. The nuts are edible.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It grows on moist, well drained slopes. Trees are slow growing. They can tolerate shade. It suits hardiness zones 4-8. Arboretum Tasmania.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed. Seeds germinate early. They can also produce sprouts from the roots and these suckers can be used.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees are slow growing. Trees produce good seed crops at about 50 years of age. They produce good crops each 2-8 years. Trees can live for 200 years.

NOTES

There are 10 Fagus species. The nuts are sweet and nutritious.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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