PLANT FACT SHEET

Annona senegalensis Pers.

GENUS *Annona* **FAMILY** Annonaceae

COMMON NAMES Wild custard apple

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, bud, Leaves, Bark

The flower buds are eaten. They are used in soups and as a flavouring. They can be dried and stored.
The flesh of the ripe fruit is eaten fresh. It has a pleasant taste. They are also used for jam and drinks. The fruit can be dried.
The young leaves are edible cooked.
The bark is chewed.

DESCRIPTION

A shrubby tree which looses its leaves during the year. It grows to 2-6 m high. The bark is grey and smooth. The young stems are hairy and orange. The older bark becomes thick and folded. It peels off to expose paler patches. The leaves are oval and blue-green. They are 18 cm long. They are curved like a spoon. Under the leaf is hairy. The leaves have a peculiar smell when crushed. The flowers are yellow green. They occur as one to three together hanging down below the twigs. The fruit is rounded and 2-7 cm across. It is smooth but divided like lots of small parts fused together. It is green when unripe and turns orange-yellow when ripe. It has a smell like a pineapple. It has many seeds. They are pale brown. The sweet pulp around the seeds is edible.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in the lowlands. It is found throughout Africa. It grows in tropical and warm regions. It grows in semi arid to sub humid regions. It grows in the Sahel. It grows in miombo woodland. The young trees need light shade. They need well drained soil. It is a tree of the savannah regions. It grows in the lowlands. It is best with a temperature range of 17-30°C and a rainfall of 700-2,500 mm per year. It can grow in arid places. It is best with a pH between 5.5-7. In Malawi it grows below 1,200 m altitude. In Kenya it grows from sea level to 1,750 m above sea level. In Brisbane Botanical Gardens.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is grown from fresh seeds. It is probably best to grow seedlings in a nursery and then to transplant them. Seed grow easily but not all at the same time. There are 2,500-3,000 seeds per kg. Seed can only be easily stored for 6 months. Plants can be cut back and allowed to re-grow. Plants can be grown by root suckers.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees are slow growing. Trees flower from October to December in the southern hemisphere. The fruit is ready from January to March. Fruit mature in about 120 days. It is best to pick fruit before they ripen and to ripen them in a dark warm place. Trees are climbed to harvest the fruit. Fruit weigh about 25 g.

NOTES

There are about 100-150 Annona species. It has anticancer properties.

PICTURES

Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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