PLANT FACT SHEET

Caryota urens L.

GENUS *Caryota* **FAMILY** Arecaceae

COMMON NAMES Wine Palm, Fishtail Palm, Toddy Palm

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Sap, Starch, Cabbage, Sago, Palm heart, Fruit, Seeds - masticatory, Flower sap

An edible starch can be extracted from the stem. The stem pith is boiled, mixed with rice and cooked.
The palm heart is edible. The very young unfolded leaves are edible. They are boiled.
The sap from the flower stalk is used for sugar or wine. For wine it is fermented and for sugar or jaggery it is boiled down.
The seeds are used as a masticatory. They are chewed with betel leaf.
The shoots are used to increase the taste of meat.
CAUTION: The fruit contain stinging crystals.

DESCRIPTION

A single stemmed palm up to 10-15 m tall. It can be 20 m high. It has a large, thick, ringed, grey trunk. The leaves are very large. They can be 5-6 m long and 40 cm wide. The fronds arch over. They are twice divided. The leaflets are like a fishtail or fin and with teeth at the tip. Trees flower after 10-15 years. It only fruits once then dies. The flowers are borne on large bunches of heavy, hanging spikes. They are 3-7 m long. They bear both male and female flowers. The fruit is round and about 2 cm across. They are reddish. There are 1-2 seeds. They look like a betel nut split in half.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in tropical and warm temperate regions. It likes a deep, rich soil. It grows in open, cleared areas of rainforest. It suits humid locations. The soil needs to be well drained. It Sri Lanka it grows up to 1,000 m above sea level. In XTBG Yunnan. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Seed germinate in 2-4 months. They can germinate in less than 1 month. It can tolerate sun while quite small.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is fast growing. From the cut flower clusters 20 litres of sap per day can be collected. A mature tree yields 30-40 kg of starch from the trunk. In Sikkim fruit are available in January.

NOTES

There are 12 Caryota species. They are tropical.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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