PLANT FACT SHEET

Poisonous

This plant, or parts of it, can be poisonous. Do not eat it unless you know which parts are safe and how they must be prepared.

Food Plants International: Fruit (Poisonous); Caution

Melia azedarach L.

GENUS *Melia* **FAMILY** Meliaceae

COMMON NAMES Bead tree, Cape lily

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Gum, Leaves, Flowers, Vegetable

CAUTION: The fruit are very poisonous. (Six can kill a person). The berries have been recorded as eaten.
They are also used for an alcoholic drink. Caution: Alcohol is a cause of cancer.
The young leaves are used in medicine and also recorded as eaten. They are roasted or fried. They are also used in curries.
A kind of toddy is made by tapping the tree.
Many parts of the tree are dangerously narcotic.
The flowers are eaten as a vegetable. They are bitter.

DESCRIPTION

A moderate sized tree. It grows 6-16 m high. It can spread 3-12 m wide. The trunk is round and the branches spread out widely. The bark is greyish-brown. The bark has long shallow cracks along the length. The leaves are alternate. They are twice divided and bright green. The leaflets are sword shaped and have teeth along the edge. They are 7-8 cm long by 2 cm wide. The leaf base has unequal sides. The flowers are lilac and have a honey scent. The occur in long open clusters in the axils of leaves. These are about 18-20 cm long. The fruit is fleshy and round. It is about 1-1.5 cm across. It is smooth and yellow. There are 4 tiny seeds in a very hard shell.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is naturalised all over India and in many tropical countries. It can grow from tropical to temperate places. It needs well drained soil. It needs to grow in full sun. It can stand light frosts. It is very drought tolerant. In East Africa it grows from sea level to 2,000 m altitude. In Sikkim it grows between 500-1,800 m above sea level. In Argentina it grows below 500 m above sea level. It grows in salty soils. It can grow in arid places. In Melbourne Botanical Gardens. In the Cairns Botanical Gardens. National Arboretum Canberra. It suits hardiness zones 8-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Seed need to be planted fresh. They can also be grown from cuttings. It can be cut back and will re-grow.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is a fast growing tree.

NOTES

Used as a medicine in Indonesia. It has anticancer properties. There are 2-3 (10-37) Melia species. It can become invasive.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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