PLANT FACT SHEET

Ziziphus mucronata Willd.

GENUS *Ziziphus* **FAMILY** Rhamnaceae

COMMON NAMES Buffalo thorn, Cape thorn

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Seeds - coffee, Leaves

The fruit are eaten fresh or dried. Often they are eaten in porridge. They can be used for drinks.
The fruit are also ground and used in coffee.
The roasted seeds are crushed and used as a coffee substitute.
The fruit have been fermented for beer.
The leaves are cooked as a vegetable.

DESCRIPTION

A shrub or small tree. It grows up to 9 m tall. It has many sharp thorns. It has spreading and often drooping branches. The trunk is often crooked. The leaves are simple and alternate. They are shiny and have 3 veins from the base. The leaves are 2.5-8 cm long by 1.9-8 cm wide. Leaves and young plant parts can be hairy. There can be thorns at the nodes. The flowers are small and green. The flowers are in small clusters in the axils of leaves. The fruit are round. They are red and shiny. There is a sweet mealy pulp around a large seed.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in the lowlands and the highlands. It grows in tropical Africa. It grows in the Sahel. It grows in open scrub. It can grow on a range of soils. It is often on embankments and termite mounds. In East Africa it grows up to 2,000 m above sea level. It is drought resistant. It can grow in arid places. It grows in Miombo woodland. Mt Lofty Botanical Gardens. Melbourne Botanical gardens. It suits hardiness zones 7-9.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown by seeds or cuttings. It is best to remove the seeds from the stone by cracking with a hammer. Seeds germinate in 2-3 weeks when outside the stone or 2 months when inside the stone.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Seedlings grow quickly. They can be 4-6 m high in 4-5 years.

NOTES

Chemical composition: Protein (crude): 2.8% (dry). Fat = 2.1% (dry). Ash (insoluble) = 4.4% (dry). Fibre (crude) = 4.1%. Carbohydrate (soluble): Starch = 29.5% (dry). Sucrose = 48,5% (dry). D-glucose = 1.1% (dry). D-fructose = 1.0% (dry). Amino acids (g [16g N]-1): Aspartic acid = 16.6g. Threonine = 3.4g. Serine = 3.9g. Glutamic acid = 17.6g. Proline = 5.3g. Glycine = 4.9g. Alanine = 7.5g. Valine= 5.1g. Cysteine = 1.0g. Methionine = 1.0g. Isoleucine = 4.3g. Leucine = 8.5g. Tyrosine = 3.6g. Phenylalanine = 4.3g. Lysine = 3.9g. Histidine = 1.4g. Arginine = 4.7g. Minerals: Sulphur = 0.05% (dry). Potassium = 0.12% (dry). Magnesium = 0.10% (dry). Calcium = 0.27% (dry). Na = 0.01% (dry). K = 2.08% (dry). Zinc = 6mg/kg-1 (dry). Iron = 289 mg/kg-1 (dry). Manganese = 10mg/kg-1 (dry). Copper = 3mg/kg-1 (dry).

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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