PLANT FACT SHEET

Use with caution

This plant can be harmful if it is eaten raw, in large amounts or without the right preparation. Read the whole fact sheet before use.

Castanospermum australe A Cunn. & Fraser ex Hook.

GENUS *Castanospermum* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Moreton Bay Chestnut

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: seeds, Nuts

The seeds are eaten after extensive processing (They are soaked for 10 days, pounded and baked.) They may still contain some poison.
CAUTION In Australia several deaths and stomach upsets have been reported in cattle which have eaten the seeds.

DESCRIPTION

An evergreen tree up to 18-35 m tall. It spreads to 5-12 m across. The stem is erect and stout. The bark is grey to brown and smooth. The leaves are glossy dark green. The leaves are 30-45 cm long. Leaves have 11-15 leaflets. These are slightly curved. The leaflets are 7-12 cm long by 2-5 cm wide. The leaves or cut bark have a cucumber like smell. Flowers are in clusters 5-15 cm long on old wood. They are yellow to orange. The flowers are pea shaped and grow one after another along a stalk in dense clusters. The fruit are broad, bean-like pods. The pods are up to 20 cm long and thick. They can be 4-6 cm wide and woody. Inside the pods, the seeds are in a white pith. There are 1-5 seeds in a pod. The seeds are large and starchy with a shiny brown coat. They are 3-5 cm long.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. Introduced and grown along the coast in Papua New Guinea in some areas. It suits rainforest and creek bank sites. It suits humid locations. It needs light, well drained soil in a protected sunny position. It is drought and frost tender and is damaged by wind. Trees need a temperature above 7°C but can stand very short periods down to 0°C. They are best with a mean annual temperature of 28°C. It suits warm temperate to tropical regions. In Melbourne Botanical Gardens. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It grows from seeds which often commence germinating while still in the pod on the ground. Seeds germinate very easily. They germinate in 2-4 weeks. Seed need to be sown when the temperature is at least 13-18°C.

Harvesting and Seed Production

In Australia fruit are produced from March to November.

NOTES

The timber is a very useful cabinet wood. There is only one Castanospermum species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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French, B.R. & Maynard, A.R. Food Plants International Database. Food Plants International

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