PLANT FACT SHEET

Arenga australasica (Wendl. & Drude) S.T. Blake

GENUS *Arenga* **FAMILY** Arecaceae

COMMON NAMES Cabbage palm, Australian Sugar Palm

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Bud, Cabbage, Palm heart

DESCRIPTION

An evergreen palm. It grows to 10-20 m high and spreads to 3 m across. The stem is erect and slender. It is has the black fibrous remains of old leaf bases along it which fall off to leave rings of leaf scars. Several stems develop forming a clump. It normally has 3 developed stems and several suckers. The trunk is light grey and 30 cm across. The fronds are widely spaced along the trunk. There is no crown-shaft of leaf bases. The leaves are long and pinnate or feather-like. They are 2-3.5 m long. The leaf stalk is rough textured. Leaflets are stiff and spreading. They are grouped into small clusters. The leaflets are narrow to oval or sword shaped. Those at the end are fused to give a fishtail appearance. The flowering stalks is 1-2 m long. There are several long, hanging, green branches. Several flowering stalks develop in the axils of leaves, then the trunk dies. Only one stem in the clump flowers at one time. The flowers are small. The fruit are small rounded berries. They don't all ripen together. The fruit are about 2 cm across. The outer flesh contains a juice that can irritate the skin.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It does best in well-composted, moist, well-drained soil. It needs a protected sunny position. It is damaged by drought and frost. It grows naturally in stony creek beds often in light shade. They are very sensitive to cold. It suits hardiness zones 11-12. In the Cairns Botanical gardens. In Townsville Anderson BG.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. The seed germinate erratically taking 2-12 months or more. It can also be grown by suckers.

NOTES

The flesh of the fruit contains calcium oxalate which can burn the skin. There are 17-20 Arenga species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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