PLANT FACT SHEET

Leucaena leucocephala (Lam.) de Wit.

GENUS *Leucaena* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Leucaena

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Pods, Fruit, Seeds - coffee, Vegetable, Flowers

The mature seeds are toasted and ground and used as a coffee substitute. They are also added to stews.
The young leaves are sometimes used as a vegetable. The leaves can be eaten in small amounts.
The tender pods and shoots are cooked as a vegetable. They are used in curries.
CAUTION The leaves contain a chemical (mimosine) which causes hair to fall out.

DESCRIPTION

A small erect tree. It grows to 6-10 m high. It has fine divided leaves. The leaves have 2 rows of leaflets. The leaves are 15 to 25 cm long and the leaflets 8 to 16 cm long. They are a dark dull green on top and dull greyish green underneath. The flowers are white and in round heads. They are in the axils of leaves or on the ends of branches. The pods are flat and 10-15 cm long and 1.8 cm wide with 15-25 seeds inside. It has shiny brown seeds. There are 3 subspecies.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It is introduced and common at low and medium altitudes throughout the tropics. It is widespread from sea level up to about 1700 m altitude in the tropics. It is often used as shade for coffee. It is drought resistant. It grows in the Sahel. It can grow on dry and poor soils. It can tolerate salt. It needs well drained soil and full sun. In Nepal it grows to 1400 m altitude. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 10-12. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It grows easily from seeds. It also regrows from cut stumps and it can be grown from cuttings. Plants are hard to eliminate and can become a weed problem in dry areas.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It grows very quickly. It grows to 8 m in 18 months. It can stand only light frosts.

NOTES

Also as Mimosaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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