PLANT FACT SHEET

Aesculus flava Solander

GENUS *Aesculus* **FAMILY** Sapindaceae

COMMON NAMES Sweet buckeye, Horse Chestnut, Yellow Buckeye

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, flower - nectar

Caution: This plant contains saponins which although poisonous are not normally easily absorbed by the body. It is nevertheless probably not wise to eat large quantities.
The seeds are eaten cooked. Before eating they are slowly roasted then crushed and washed for 2-5 days in running water. They are then dried and ground into a powder.
The flowers contain a sweet nectar which can be sucked out.

DESCRIPTION

A tree which grows to 20-30 m high and spreads to 8 m across. The bark is dark brown and becomes furrowed with age. The leaves are divided into leaflets like fingers on a hand. There are usually 5 leaflets which have sharp teeth. They can be 15 cm long. The leaves are dark green but turn yellow before falling. The flowers are small and yellow or pink. They are in upright panicles or clusters. The flower clusters are 15 cm long. The fruit are smooth and rounded and are 6 cm across. The fruit are covered in brown scales. The fruit have 2-4 seeds. The seed can be 4.5 cm across.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. They grow naturally in Eastern North America - Pennsylvania to Tennessee and west to Ohio in woodland on moist rich soils. It grows between 150-1900 m altitude in SE of the USA. It grows on streambanks. It prefers a well drained soil. Trees are very hardy to cold when dormant. Plants can grow in shady places. Temperate. It suits hardiness zones 4-9.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Trees can be grown from seed. Fresh seed which has not been allowed to dry out should be used. Seed germinates quickly. Trees transplant fairly easily.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees reach maturity in about 60-80 years.

NOTES

There are 15 Aesculus species.
Also put in the family Hippocastanaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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