



PLANT FACT SHEET

Caryota mitis Lour.

GENUS *Caryota* FAMILY Arecaceae

COMMON NAMES Lesser fishtail palm, Clustered fishtail palm

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Cabbage, Starch, Sago, Palm heart, Sap

The bud is cooked and eaten. It is slightly bitter.

The fruit is poisonous but the seeds are edible.

Edible starch can be extracted from the stem.

Sap is extracted from the flowering stem and used for sugar or wine.

DESCRIPTION

A small slender palm and the only representative of this genus in the Philippines which sends up shoots from the base of the trunk, forming clumps. It forms a cluster of closely spaced stems. It can be 5 m high. The trunks are 5-15 cm across. They have well spaced rings. The leaves point upwards. The leaves are twice divided and have fishtail leaflets. The leaves are 2-4 m long. The stems have black coarsely woven fibres left behind when the leaf stalk bases split. The flowering stalk is 25-45 cm long with pale cream flowers. The fruit are 15 to 16 mm across and frequently broader than high. The flower envelope is 8.5 to 9 mm across. The stems die when the fruit matures but other stems keep growing. The fruit contain stinging crystals so need to be handled with care. Each fruit contains one seed.

HABITAT

It grows in tropical and subtropical places. It can grow in warm temperate regions. It requires a rich well-drained soil. It needs regular moisture and humidity. It can grow in full or part sun. They are found wild in forests near streams at low altitudes in the Province of Palawan in the Philippines. It can grow in arid places. In Indonesia it grows up to 1,500 m above sea level. It suits hardiness zones 10-12. Adelaide Botanical Gardens. Mt Cootha Botanical Gardens. At ECHO.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed or by division of the suckers. Seed usually take 4-6 months to germinate. Plants respond to nitrogen fertiliser. Plants tolerate full sun when small.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants are fast growing.

NOTES

There are 12 Caryota species. They are tropical.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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