PLANT FACT SHEET

Cola acuminata (P. Beauv.) Schott et Endl.

GENUS *Cola* **FAMILY** Malvaceae

COMMON NAMES Cola nut

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Nut, Herb, Flavouring, Fruit, Leaves

The seeds are chewed for a stimulating effect.
They are also used in foods.
They are used to flavour drinks. An extract prepared from the dried kernels are used to flavour drinks. ice cream, candy, baked goods and liqueurs.

DESCRIPTION

A medium sized tree. It grows 13-20 m tall. In cultivation it is usually 6-9 m high. It commonly has low branches. The bark is dark green or grey. The small branches are smooth. The leaves are near the tip of the branches. They are 7-22 cm long by 2-8 cm wide. The tip is usually twisted downwards. The leaves are leathery and dark green. The flowers are in irregular branched clusters. They are white or cream with red inside. The fruit has a rough, mottled skin. They are made up of 5 cells. The fruit can be 20 cm long and 6 cm wide. They occur singly. It has thin white flesh. The seeds are large, flat and bright red. There are up to 14 seeds. When the seed coat is removed the seeds split into four pieces.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It suits the hot wet tropical lowlands. It will grow in sun or part shade. It is damaged by frost. It is best in fertile soil that are well-drained. It is native to West Africa. It suits hardiness zones 11-12. It cannot tolerate high pH. At ECHO.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are usually grown from seeds. Seed only remain viable for about 2 weeks. Cuttings can be used. Plants can also be grown using layering. Plants can be budded. For seeds, the pods are put in a heap and kept damp for 16 days and then the seed coat removed and the seed planted 10 cm deep.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees will bear in 7-10 years from seed. They can continue bearing for 100 years. In Central African Republic flowers have been recorded in February, May and August and fruit in June.

NOTES

There are about 125 Cola species. The seeds are rich in caffeine.
Also put in the family Sterculiaceae.
In Botanical Gardens in Slovenia presumably in a hot house.

PICTURES

Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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