PLANT FACT SHEET

Guaiacum officinale L.

GENUS *Guaiacum* **FAMILY** Zygophyllaceae

COMMON NAMES Common lignum-vitae, Guaiac tree

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Resin - flavouring, Fruit, Seed

The plant is the source of a resin used for flavouring cakes and chicle.
It is added to edible oils to prevent acidification and improve keeping quality.
The cooked fruit are tean.

DESCRIPTION

A tree. It grows 8 m tall. The leaves are 5-12 cm long. There are 4-6 leaflets. These are broadly oval and rounded at the tip. The veins are raised underneath. The flowers are about 2.5 cm across. They are blue-purple to white. The petals are hairy on the upper surface. The ovary has 2 lobes. The fruit are heart shaped and 2 cm long. There is 1 seed in each lobe. The seed is brownish and about 1.2 cm long.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It needs a temperature above 15°C. It grows in lowland dry forest often near the coast.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is slow growing.

NOTES

There are 4 or 5 Guaiacum species. They occur in Central America. The resin is used in medicine. It is the official emblem of the Bahamas.

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