PLANT FACT SHEET

Hymenaea courbaril L.

GENUS *Hymenaea* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES South American locust

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, seeds - aril, Bark - drink

The pulp of the pod is eaten.
It is also added to water and can be fermented into an alcoholic drink. Caution: Alcohol is a cause of cancer.
The flour from the pod is eaten. It is also made into porridge.
The bark is used to produce a drink.

DESCRIPTION

An evergreen tree. It grows 12-33 m high. The trunk is 60-80 cm across. It is straight. The leaves are alternate. They are 8-10 cm long by 5-6 cm wide. The leaves have 2 lobes. The 2 sides of the leaf are unequal and they taper to a short tip. The leaves have yellow veins and leaf stalks. The flowers are of both sexes. The flowers are small and white. They have narrow petals. The fruit are pods. There are 1-5 seeds in the fruit. They are 1.5-2 cm long and dark red. The pulp of the pod is yellow. It has a bad smell.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is native to tropical America. In Costa Rica it grows to 800 m altitude. In Bolivia they grow up to 1200 m altitude. It grows in lowland dry forest in the Amazon in Brazil. It can grow on poor and sandy soils. It grows in Miombo woodland in Africa.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. The ripe fruit are harvested and left in the sun to make them fully ripe and therefore easier to remove the seeds. Seeds can only be stored for 4 months. Seeds germinate in 12-18 days. The seeds can be made to germinate by scraping the seed coat or by dropping them in hot water then putting them quickly into cold water. Seedlings can be transplanted in about 6 months.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is slow growing. In South America it flowers between March to May and fruits by August to October. Trees often fruit every second year. A tree can produce up to 2,000 fruit.

NOTES

There are 16 Hymenaea species. They grow in the tropics. Also as Caesalpinaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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