PLANT FACT SHEET

Synsepalum brevipes (Baker) T. D. Penn.

GENUS *Synsepalum* **FAMILY** Sapotaceae

COMMON NAMES Stem-fruit miraculous berry

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Seeds

The pulp of the fruit is eaten raw.
The ripe fruit are soaked in water, squeezed and filtered and sugar added then used as a drink.
The seeds are eaten raw.

DESCRIPTION

A small to large evergreen tree. It can grow from 3 to 35 m tall. It has a dense crown and fluted trunk. There are often buttresses at the base. The bark is grey and rough and flakes into rectangular scales. It secretes a white sap. The leaves are dark green and oval but tapering to the base. They are shiny on the upper surface and slightly hairy on the lower surface. The young leaves and stalks are densely hairy. There are 8-14 side veins on each side. Leaves vary from 9 to 20 cm long and 3.5 to 8 cm wide. The leaf stalk can be 1 cm long. A pair of 1 cm long leaf like stipules persist at the base of the leaf stalk. The flowers are yellowish white and have a smell. They are in thick clusters below the leaves in small cushions on bar branches. The fruit are small and rusty green. They are hairy berries 3 cm long and 2.4 cm across. The fruit have a thick skin but are soft and acid sweet. They are edible. The one seed is shiny brown with a large scar on one side.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It occurs in lowland rainforests in East Africa. It suits humid locations. It occurs from sea level to 1,500 m altitude. Occasionally it grows to 1,600 m. It grows in areas with rainfalls from 1,000 mm to 2,000 mm. It grows in areas with temperatures between 16°C and 30°C. It occurs in areas where there is a high permanent water table. It can be in seasonally flooded forest.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants grow naturally from seed. To extract the seed the ripe berries should be crushed and the seed removed. The seed should be soaked in cold water for 12 hours before planting.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees are slow growing. Ripe fruit are harvested from the tree. Fruiting is seasonal. Flowering occurs in May, August and December. Ripe fruit are available October to February. The flowering and fruiting period is therefore long.

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