PLANT FACT SHEET

Pisonia grandis R. Br.

GENUS *Pisonia* **FAMILY** Nyctaginaceae

COMMON NAMES Pisonia tree, Giant Pisonia, Lettuce tree

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves

The young leaves are eaten cooked.

DESCRIPTION

A medium to large soft wooded tree. It grows up to 10-24 m tall and with a spread of 4-6 m. The stem is erect and stout. It is 30-50 cm across. The trunk is pale grey. It has furrows along it. It has large leaf scars. The branches are brittle. The young growth is finely hairy. The leaves are opposite and rather thin. They are oval and tapering to the base. They are up to 20-30 cm long and 10-18 cm wide. The leaf stalk is up to 5-8 cm long. The leaves are light green. There are 8-10 side veins each side of the midrib. The flowers are small and on the ends of branches. The flowers are greenish and very sticky. Birds can be trapped and die due to the sticky flowers. The flowers can have either one sex or two sexes. The fruit have glands. The fruit are about 1 cm long by 0.2 cm wide. The fruit have 5 ribs and there are prickles along the ribs. They are hairy between the ribs. The seeds are 9-10 mm by 1.5-2 mm. At least in the Solomon Islands trees rarely flower.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. They occur from Malaysia to Polynesia. It grows in coastal areas. It prefers moist well drained soils and open sunny positions. It is drought and frost tender. It often grows on coral islands and atolls. It suits hardiness zones 11-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Trees can be grown from cuttings. Seeds can also be used. (Fruit ripen about July to October.) Fresh seed should be used. Birds also help scatter seed. These large sea birds mean the trees are often spread to very remote islands due to the sticky seeds.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Many of the leaves are succulent and edible.

NOTES

There are about 50 Pisonia species. They grow in the tropics and subtropics. There are about 25 Ceodes species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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French, B.R. & Maynard, A.R. Food Plants International Database. Food Plants International

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