PLANT FACT SHEET

Mauritia flexuosa L.f.

GENUS *Mauritia* **FAMILY** Arecaceae

COMMON NAMES Tree of Life, Buriti Nut

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Nuts, Stem-starch, Sap, Palm heart, Oil, Sago, Cabbage, Flower

The fruit are eaten. The fruit are soaked in water to soften the outer layer which is then scraped off and the layer around the seed is eaten. They are also dried and converted into flour.
The fruit are eaten cooked. The fruit are used for wine. The fruit yield an edible oil.
The oily pulp of the fruit is boiled with sugar and made into a sweetmeat.
The juice of the stem is used for a drink. The sap from the cut flower stalk is collected and used for wine.
The trunk pith contains a starch similar to sago.

DESCRIPTION

A very large palm about 22 m tall. The bark is grey-brown to black. The trunk is 30-50 cm across. The leaves are arranged in spirals and spread out like fingers on a hand. The leaf stalk forms a sheath at the top of the trunk. The leaf blade is 1.5 m x 3 m. It is shiny and dark green. The leaf stalk is 2.25 m long and 8-30 cm wide. It is light green. The fruiting stalk is 2.75 m long. It is reddish brown and the small stalks are 70 cm long. The fruit is oval and 45 cm x 4 cm. The fruit are red with yellow flesh. The fruit is covered with overlapping brown scales. These are arranged in a spiral. The pulp is reddish. The seed is oval and 2 cm x 2.5 cm. They are brown.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in tropical regions. It suits the hot, humid tropical lowlands. It grows in large colonies in areas subject to periodic flooding. In Bolivia it grows up to 300 m altitude and occasionally to 400m. It can grow in acid soils. In Cairns Botanical Gardens. In Townsville palmetum. It suits hardiness zones 11-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Seed germinate erratically. Seeds take 2-6 months to germinate. The fresh fruit can be used directly as seeds. Seeds are only viable for a short time.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants only develop slowly. The fruit contain 8-9% edible oil.

NOTES

There are 2 Mauritia species. The fruit have 30-300 mg carotene per 100 g of pulp, which is equivalent to 50,000-500,000 IU of provitamin A. The mesocarp contains 5.2% protein. It has antioxidant properties and is rich in Vitamin A.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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