PLANT FACT SHEET

Cordia sinensis Lam.

GENUS *Cordia* **FAMILY** Boraginaceae

COMMON NAMES Grey-leaved saucer-berry, Grey leafed cordia

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Root, Gum, Leaves

The fruit is eaten green as a vegetable or pickled. They are sweet and sticky. The skin is removed and the seeds are not eaten. They are added to porridge instead of sugar.
The roots are eaten raw.
The clear gum from the tree is edible.
The ripe fruit is eaten raw. The fruit are fermented into beer.

DESCRIPTION

A tangled shrub or small tree. It loses its leaves during the year. It is 3-12 m tall. The trunk is crooked. It has many branches and these often droop over. The bark is grey and smooth when young. It later becomes dark and roughly grooved. The leaves are grey-green. They are narrow and oblong. They can be 9 cm long. They feel rough to touch and have hairs on both sides. The tip of the leaf is rounded. The leaf stalk is 1 cm long. Leaves are almost opposite. The flowers are small and like tubes. The 4 or 5 petals are bent backwards. They are fused into a short tube at the base. The flowers are creamy white. They have a sweet smell. The flowers occur in clusters at the ends of branches. They grow on branched hairy stalks. The fruit is oval and 2 cm long. It has a tip at the end and is held in a cup of leaves (calyx). The fruit is orange-red and has a sticky edible pulp. There are 1-4 tiny seeds. The seeds are embedded in a clear pulp.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is widespread in Africa at low altitudes and in dry areas. It is more common in dry river beds. It can grow on sandy or salty soils. In Africa it grows from sea level to 1,400 m above sea level. In Tanzania it grows in areas with a rainfall between 600-1,000 mm. It can grow in arid places. It grows on gravelly soils and in wasteland. It is drought hardy. In Pakistan it is found in dry areas up to 300 m above sea level. It grows in the lowlands and often along rivers.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It can be grown from seed or cuttings. Plants also grow naturally. (There are 14,000 seeds per kg.) When seed are sown fresh no treatment is necessary. For stored seed they should have warm water poured over them then be allowed to soak before being planted. Seed can be stored for 3 months at room temperature. It is best to plant seeds where they are to grow.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is a fairly slow growing plant. In India the fruit are available August to February.

NOTES

The fruit are high in Vitamins. There are about 300 Cordia species.

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