



PLANT FACT SHEET

Afrocanthium lactescens (Hiern) Lantz

GENUS *Afrocanthium* FAMILY Rubiaceae

COMMON NAMES Gummy canthium

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit

The ripe fruit are eaten raw. They are sweet.

DESCRIPTION

A small tree. It grows to 5-10 m high. The branches are horizontal. The bark is dark grey. It is smooth but becomes rough with age. The leaves are produced in side spur shoots. One pair of leaves and one internode are added each year. Leaves are oval and 19 cm long by 16 cm wide. They have a smooth feel. They are pale to dark green and turn yellow in autumn. The base is lobed. The leaf stalk is thick and 1.5 cm long. The flowers are small and white or pale yellow. They have a sweet scent. They occur in loose open sprays in the clusters of leaves. The fruit are oval and unequal. They are 7-10 mm long. Sometimes they have 2 lobes. They are brown to purple when mature. They are edible.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in deciduous woodland. It is often protected amongst rocks. In Kenya it grows between 1,000-2,300 m altitude. In Tanzania it grows in areas with a rainfall between 1,000-1,300 mm.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from fresh seed.

Harvesting and Seed Production

In Tanzania fruit are collected from April to June.

NOTES

There are about 200 Canthium species.

REFERENCES

Ashagre, M., et al, 2016, Ethnobotanical study of wild edible plants in Burji District, Segen Area Zone of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR), Ethiopia. Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine (2016) 12:32 (As Canthium lactescens)

Fowler, D. G., 2007, *Zambian Plants: Their Vernacular Names and Uses*. Kew. p 55

Glover et al, 1966b,

- Goode, P., 1989, Edible Plants of Uganda. FAO p 30 (As *Canthium lactescens*)
- Grivetti, L. E., 1980, Agricultural development: present and potential role of edible wild plants. Part 2: Sub-Saharan Africa, Report to the Department of State Agency for International Development. p 45 (As *Canthium lactescens*)
- Jardin, C., 1970, List of Foods Used In Africa, FAO Nutrition Information Document Series No 2.p 124
- Kenya Trees, Shrubs, Lianas, 1994, nzdl.org (As *Canthium lactescens*)
- Lovett, J. C. et al, Field Guide to the Moist Forest Trees of Tanzania. p 127
- Maundu, P. et al, 1999, Traditional Food Plants of Kenya. National Museum of Kenya. 288p
- Mutie, F. M., et al, 2023, Important Medicinal and Food Taxa (Orders and Families) in Kenya, Based on Three Quantitative Approaches. Plants 2023, 12, 1145
- Ojelel, S., et al, 2019, Wild edible plants used by communities in and around selected forest reserves of Teso-Karamoja region, Uganda. Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine (2019) 15:3 (As *Canthium lactescens*)
- Palgrave, K.C., 1996, Trees of Southern Africa. Struik Publishers. p 882
- Peters, C. R., O'Brien, E. M., and Drummond, R.B., 1992, Edible Wild plants of Sub-saharan Africa. Kew. p 168
- Ruffo, C. K., Birnie, A. & Tengnas, B., 2002, Edible Wild Plants of Tanzania. RELMA p 180 (As *Canthium lactescens*)
- Termote, C., et al, 2014, Assessing the potential of wild foods to reduce the cost of a nutritionally adequate diet: An example from eastern Baringo District, Kenya. Food and Nutrition Bulletin, vol. 35, no. 4 (As *Canthium lactescens*)
- World Checklist of Useful Plant Species 2020. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

PROVIDED BY Food Plants International

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

LICENCE CC BY-NC-SA 3.0

ONLINE FACT SHEET <https://www.echocommunity.org/en/resources/dc9ceebe-3509-483e-aeca-1f6709827750>