PLANT FACT SHEET

Searsia pyroides (Burch.) Moffett

GENUS *Searsia* **FAMILY** Anacardiaceae

COMMON NAMES Fire-thorned rhus, Common taaibos, Firethorn

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Fruit - drink, Leaves - tea

The fruit are eaten raw as a snack. They can be eaten ripe or unripe. Unripe fruit are slightly acidic but ripe fruit are sweet.
The fruit are dried and used to make a drink.

DESCRIPTION

A plant which varies a lot. It can be a shrub or a tree. It is spreading. It can be 5 m tall. It is frequently spiny. The bark is dark brown. The young stems are green. They often have rusty velvet hairs and stout spines. It can be evergreen or lose its leaves in the dry season. The leaves have 3 leaflets. The leaflets vary in shape. The end leaflet can be 3-8 cm long by 1-2.3 cm wide. The side leaflets are shorter. The leaves are dark green on both surfaces and have a white covering of hairs. Male and female flowers are on separate plants. The flowers are very small and yellow. The occur in heads at the ends of branches. These can be 20 cm long. The fruit is 4-5 mm across. They are red when mature.
There are several varieties.

HABITAT

A tropical plant and subtropical plant. It is drought resistant. It grows in open woodland. It is also on rocky hillsides and along watercourses. It grows in the lowlands and the highlands. It grows in dry places and in rocky locations. It can grow in woodland or desert. In southern Africa it grows between 6-2,100 m above sea level. In East Africa it grows between 1,200-2,700 m altitude. It grows in areas with a rainfall between 700-1,500 mm per year. It can grow in arid places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seeds. The older seeds should be soaked in water overnight.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is moderately fast growing. The fruit are harvested by bending over the branches and plucking the fruit. Fruit are collected at the end of the rainy season.

NOTES

There are about 200 Rhus species.

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