PLANT FACT SHEET

Butea monosperma (Lam.) Taub.

GENUS *Butea* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Flame of the Forest

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Roots, Flowers, Gum, Leaves, Pods, Seeds

The root has been recorded as eaten in India and Cambodia.
The succulent young roots are roasted or boiled and eaten with salt.
The flowers are cooked and eaten as a vegetable.

DESCRIPTION

A strongly branched tree. It has an irregular trunk. It becomes twisted with age. It grows 8 to 15 m high and spreads to 3-5 m wide. The cut bark yields a red gum. The leaves are leathery but with a silky back. They consist of 3 diamond shaped leaflets. These are 10-20 cm long by 4-20 cm wide and on stalks almost as long. The flowers are on equal length stalks around a common axis. These are 15 cm long and have rich red flowers with silver hairs. The flowers are 3-4 cm long. The flower stalks appear along the bare branches. The fruit is oblong and 10-20 cm long by 3-6 cm wide. They are flat, thin pods with silvery hairs. The seed are produced towards the top end of the pod. The seeds are 3.5 cm long by 2.5 cm wide and very flattened.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is native to India, Burma and Sri Lanka. They are frost tender. It grows in the Himalayas up to 1,220 m altitude. It can grow on gravels or plains soils. It needs a well-drained soil. It needs full sun. It can tolerate some soil salinity. It suits hardiness zones 11-12. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. They should be planted as soon as they ripen. The seedlings can be transplanted after 2-3 years.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The tree is slow growing.

NOTES

There are 2-4 Butea species. The leaf is used as a plate for serving food.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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