PLANT FACT SHEET

Carissa bispinosa (L.) Desf. ex Brenan

GENUS *Carissa* **FAMILY** Apocynaceae

COMMON NAMES Fork-spined carissa

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit

The fruit are eaten fresh. They are also used for drinks, as a flavouring and preservative.

DESCRIPTION

Normally a shrub. It can be partly a climber. It grows 3 m tall. It is evergreen, and spiny. The spines can have one or two forks. The leaves vary but are often egg shaped. They are 1-7 cm long by 0.8-3.5 cm wide. The tip has a small thorn-like point. Leaves are dark green above and paler underneath. The flowers are small and white. They have long tubes which flare out. They have a scent. They occur in clusters at the ends of twigs. The fruit are berries which are 1.6 cm long. They are purple-red. They contain 1-2 seeds. The fruit are bright red and edible.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It occurs at medium to low altitude in dry woodland and coastal scrub. It is also at the edges of evergreen forest. It is damaged by drought and frost. In Malawi the variety grows from 1,250-2,150 m altitude. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 10-11.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed or cuttings. It can be grown as a hedge.

NOTES

There about 20 Carissa species. All Carissa species bear edible fruit. They grow in the tropics and subtropics.

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