PLANT FACT SHEET

Myristica fragrans Houttuyn

GENUS *Myristica* **FAMILY** Myristicaceae

COMMON NAMES Nutmeg and mace

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, seeds - aril, Herb, Spice

The seed is used for the spice called nutmeg. This is used to flavour custards, sauces, cakes and pies.
The red layer (aril) around the seed produces the spice called mace. It is used in soups, sauces, curries, fruit salads, cakes, pickles and baked goods.
The outer shell of the fruit is sliced, cooked and crystallised to make a candy. It is also used for pickles.
CAUTION The oil in the seed contains a poisonous drug called myristicin.

DESCRIPTION

An evergreen tree. It grows up to 10-23 m tall. The bark is light brown. Leaves are simple, pointed and dark green on top. They are pale green underneath. They are 12 cm long. Male and female flowers are separate but often on the same tree. Fruit occur on female and bisexual trees. The flowers are small and yellow and 1 cm across. they do not have petals. The sepals are cup shaped and 2-3 lobed. The fruit are round, about 5-6 cm across and yellow when ripe. When the fruit is ripe it splits into two halves. All parts of the tree when bruised have a smell of nutmeg. The seed is used as nutmeg while the red seed coat is dried and ground to produce mace.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is native to Maluku in Indonesia. It suits hot humid tropical places and needs a fertile well drained soil. It grows in lowland areas and needs protection from wind. It cannot tolerate drought. It suits hardiness zones 11-12. At MARDI. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Trees are normally grown from seed. Seeds are slow growing. They can take 30 months to germinate. Plants can also be grown by cuttings and grafting. A spacing of 9 m apart is suitable. A ratio of a male tree to 10 female trees is used. Extra male trees are removed.

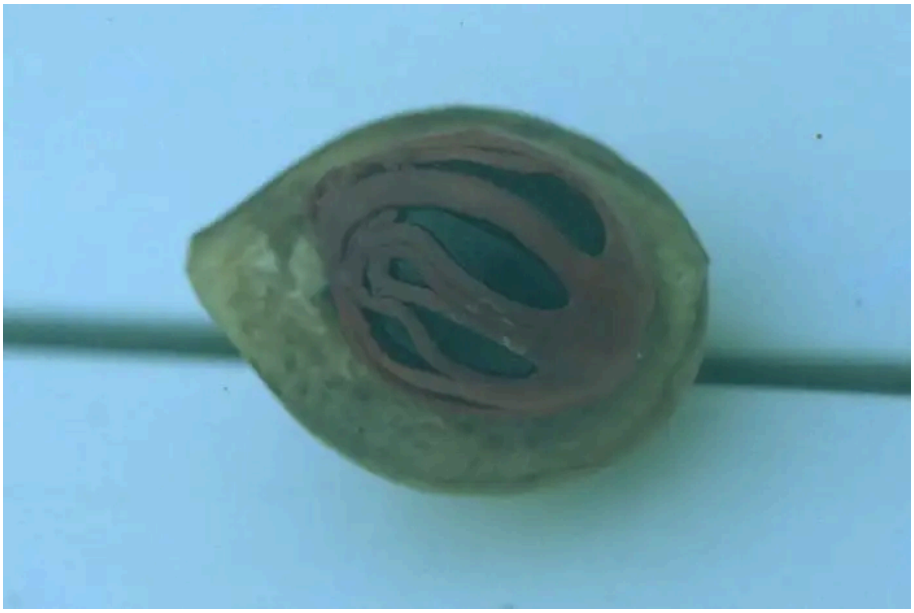
Harvesting and Seed Production

Seeds take 3 months to germinate. Trees begin producing after 5-7 years. Trees can keep producing for 40 years. The mace is peeled away from the nutmeg and dried. When the nutmeg is dry it rattles.

NOTES

There are about 72 Myristica species. They grow in the tropics.

PICTURES



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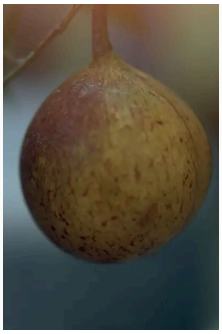

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