PLANT FACT SHEET

Bauhinia purpurea L.

GENUS *Bauhinia* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Butterfly Tree, Purple orchid Tree

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Flowers, Leaves, Seeds, Fruit, Gum

The young leaves are cooked and eaten in India. They are used in curries.
The flower buds and young fruit pods are cooked as a vegetable. They are also pickled.
The ripe seeds are fried and eaten.
The gum is edible.

DESCRIPTION

An evergreen shrub or small tree. It grows to 4-10 m high and spreads to 2 m across. The stem is erect and slender. The branches are crooked. The leaves are green and have 2 lobes which divide the leaves for half their length. They are rounded and 7-16 cm long and the same width. The leaf stalk is 3 cm long. The flowers are purple and orchid like. They are large and can be 6 cm across. They can occur either on their own or in flowering branches and can be in the axils of leaves or at the ends of branches. The flower buds are 4-5 angled. The flower petals are reddish purple and often with coloured marks. The petals do not overlap and there are 3-4 stamens. The fruit are oblong brown pods. They are flattened and can be 25 cm long by 2 cm wide. There are 5-6 seeds. The seeds are 12-13 mm long.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is drought and frost tender. In Nepal it grows from 300-3000 m altitude. It can grow in arid places. In the Indian Himalayas it grows between 1,300-1,400 m above sea level. It suits hardiness zones 11-12. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Seed need to be treated to help them grow. It can be grown by air-layering and grafting.

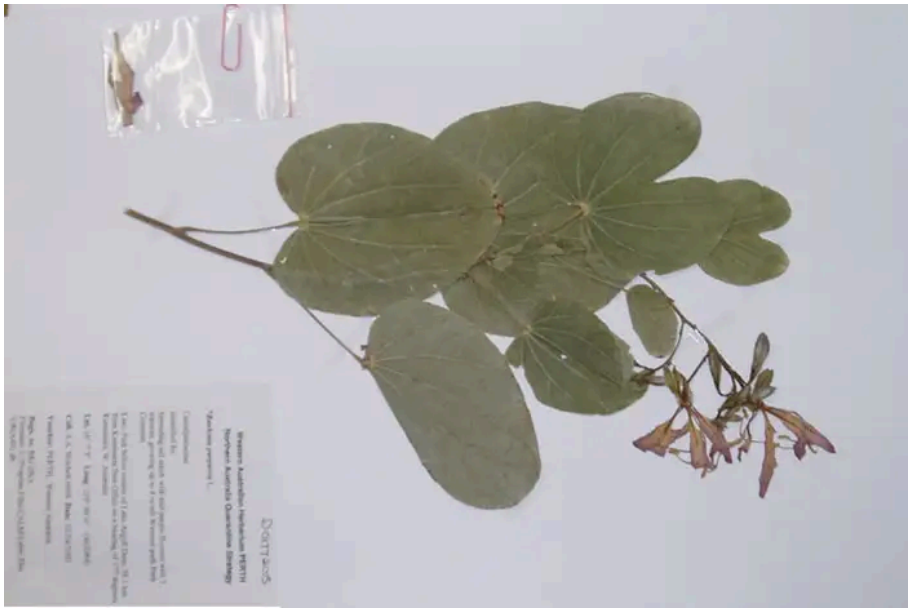
Harvesting and Seed Production

It begins flowering at an early age.

NOTES

A tree cultivated as an ornamental. There are about 250-350 Bauhinia species. Most are in the tropics. Also as Caesalpinaceae.

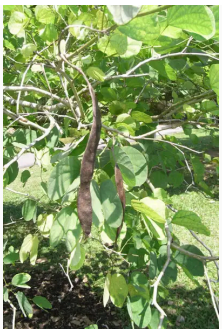
PICTURES



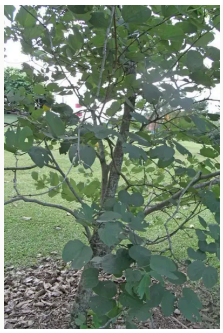
Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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