PLANT FACT SHEET

Hovenia dulcis Thunberg

GENUS *Hovenia* **FAMILY** Rhamnaceae

COMMON NAMES Japanese raisin tree, Chinese raisin tree

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Flower stalks

The fruit stalk is fleshy and edible. (It tastes like ripe pears.) They are also used for jellies.
They can be dried and stored for several months.
The stalks are used for drinks and for alcoholic drinks. Caution: Alcohol is a cause of cancer.
The sweet extract from the leaves and seeds is used as a honey substitute.
The ripe fruit are also eaten. The fruit are fermented into vinegar.

DESCRIPTION

A tree which loses its leaves in winter. It can grow to 22 m tall. The tree has a single trunk and a round crown. The lower branches often drop off. The bark is deeply cracked. The leaves overlap. The leaves are shiny green. They are 15 cm long and limp. Masses of small cream flowers occur. The fruit stalk is swollen and it is edible. The seed pod is inedible and falls off. The stalk turns red and lets light through. This fruit stalk falls to the ground and is then ready to eat.

HABITAT

A temperate climate plant. Plants are cold hardy to -23°C. It can grow in shaded places but full sun helps improve flowering and ripening. It can grow in a range of soils. It does best with constant moisture. It needs protection from dry winds. It suits hardiness zones 6-9. Arboretum Tasmania. In XTBG Yunnan. In Sichuan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed. The seed has a coat which prevents water entering so this needs to be cut with a small nick. Another method is to soak the seed to water at 60°C 3 times over 3 days. Seed then planted and placed in the sun will germinate in 1 to 4 weeks. Soft wood cuttings can also be used.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Trees grow slowly about 0.5 m a year. Trees grown from seed bear fruit in 7-10 years. The fruit stalks ripen late in the season and can be used similarly to raisins. They can be stored in a cool dark place for 2 months.

NOTES

There are 2 Hovenia species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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