PLANT FACT SHEET

Ficus vasta Forssk.

GENUS *Ficus* **FAMILY** Moraceae

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Gum

The ripe figs are eaten raw. They can be dried and eaten stewed.

DESCRIPTION

A fig. It is a tree. It grows up to 25 m tall. The crown is spreading and rounded. Sometimes the tree grows attached to other plants. The young branches are thick with soft dense hairs. They are 5-12 mm thick. They are yellow-brown. The leaves are stiff and almost round. They are 8-25 cm long by 4-23 cm wide. The tip is rounded but often with a blunt point. The leaf base is rounded and heart shaped. The leaf stalk is 3-12 cm long and hairy. The veins below the leaf are well marked. The veins fork near the edge of the leaf. The fruit are figs. One or 2 occur together near the leaves. They hardly have any stalk. They are almost round and 2 cm across. They are green with paler spots when ripe. The figs are hairy but have a clear opening.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in dry savannah near rivers. In East Africa it grows between 1,400-2,500 m altitude.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants grow naturally from seed. They can also be grown from cuttings. The figs have plenty of seed and these should be extracted from the figs and dried before planting. Seed can be stored for 2 months. Plants should be put at a wide spacing. The pollinating wasp is Elisabethiella socotrensis (Mayr.).

NOTES

There are about 800-1000 Ficus species. They are mostly in the tropics. There are 120 Ficus species in tropical America.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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