PLANT FACT SHEET

Use with caution

This plant can be harmful if it is eaten raw, in large amounts or without the right preparation. Read the whole fact sheet before use.

Ginkgo biloba L.

GENUS *Ginkgo* **FAMILY** Ginkgoaceae

COMMON NAMES Maidenhair tree, Ginkgo nut

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Nuts, Nuts-oil

CAUTION: The seeds are poisonous if eaten raw. They should not be eaten by people on antidepressants or by pregnant women.
The seeds are cooked or roasted and are edible and nutritious.
They are used in both sweet and savoury dishes.
The seeds are soaked in hot water to loosen the skins then roasted. They turn green. They are used in soups, stews, stir-fried dishes, and drinks.
The nuts yield an edible oil.

DESCRIPTION

A large tree. It loses its leaves during the year. It grows to 24-35 m high. They are tall and upright when young and become spreading later. It can be 9 m wide. There are many branches. The small branches are of two forms - long and short. The leaves are arranged in spirals on the long branches. The green leaves are 10 cm long. They are fan shaped. They turn golden yellow in autumn. Trees are separately male and female. The reproductive structures are in clusters in the axils of the scale like leaves at the tips of the short branches. The pollen cones hang down. The ovules are on long divided fruiting stalks. Only one seed ripens on each fruiting stalk. The seeds are long and hang down on stalks. The seeds are edible and nutritious. The fruit have an unpleasant smell.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It resists pollution. It needs shelter from strong winds. It does best in deep, fertile soil. It can tolerate frost. In Melbourne Botanical Gardens. In Hobart Botanical gardens. It suits hardiness zones 3-10. Arboretum Tasmania. National Arboretum Canberra.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed or cuttings in autumn. They can also be grown by grafting. Seed have a hard coat and need to be soaked in water before planting. Trees should not be pruned as this causes branches to die back.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Seedlings are grown for 3-4 years before planting out. Fruit does not appear until trees are at least 20 years old. Flowers are fertilised by free swimming male sperm which reach the ovules through a film of water. The nuts store well in the shell but only for a short time once out of the shell. Trees can live for over 1,000 years.

NOTES

There is only one Ginkgo species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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