PLANT FACT SHEET

Cathormion umbellatum (Vahl) Kosterm.

GENUS *Cathormion* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Cathormion, Bean-tree, Cathormium

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Seeds, Pods

The young pods are eaten after roasting.

DESCRIPTION

A medium sized tree. It grows to 6-15 m high and spreads to 3-8 m wide. It has a fine lacy crown with small branches which droop over. The bark is dark brown, rough and furrowed. It becomes flaky. The trunk can be crooked or divided. It often has several stems. The young shoots are hairy. On young shoots from re-growing branches, there are spines. The leaves are twice divided. The leaves are 1.2-2.5 cm long then there are 1-2 pairs of branches with 4-7 pairs of leaflets each. These leaflets are 2.5-5 cm long by 1-2 cm wide. There are small round glands where the small leaf branches join. They are glossy light green on top and dull underneath. The flower cluster occurs at the end of the stalk in the axils of leaves and is erect and short. The flowers are about 1 cm long and yellow. They occur in round clusters where each flower stalk of the same length comes from the same point. The flowers have a perfume. The fruit are pods and these are 7-10-20 cm long by 1.5-2 cm wide. The pods are curved and thick and hard. They break into segments which have one seed each. The seeds are dark brown and 1.3 cm across. They are 2 mm thick.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It occurs in coastal areas near streams. They do best with well drained soil and a sunny position. Often they are on the inner edge of the mangrove forest.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. The seed need treatment before sowing.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants are moderately fast growing. In Northern Australia the pods are ripe July to October.

NOTES

There are 15 Cathormion species. Also as Mimosaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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