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.

Barringtonia asiatica (L.) Kurz.

GENUS *Barringtonia* **FAMILY** Lecythidaceae

COMMON NAMES Fish Killer tree, Beach Barringtonia

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

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

The young leaf shoots may be eaten fresh. The young flowers are also eaten.
The young fruit have been recorded eaten as a vegetable. Cooking destroys the saponins.
CAUTION This plant is used as a fish poison. They contain saponins.
The seeds are oily and toxic. They have been recorded as being cooked and eaten in Indonesia and the Andaman Islands.

DESCRIPTION

A small tree. It is 5-9 m tall. It can grow up to 25 m. It spreads to 3-5 m wide. The trunk is short and erect and branches occur from near the base. The leaves are 20 to 40 cm long and 10-15 cm wide and without individual leaf stalks. They are shiny light green, and larger near the tip than the base. The tip is rounded and somewhat pointed. The flowers are large and pink and white. They are 3-5 cm across. The fruit is sharply 4 and rarely 5-angled. The fruit are 12 cm across, woody and broad at one end. They contain one large seed.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. They occur along the seashore throughout the islands of Asia and the Pacific. Trees often lean out over the sea. It prefers well-composted, moist, well-drained soil. It can grow easily in sandy soil. It can tolerate salty soils. It suits a protected sunny position. It is drought and frost tender. It suits hardiness zones 11-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from cuttings or seed. Seed need to be sown fresh. Seed germinate readily. Young trees need shade. Plants can be grown by layering.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Seed take up to 2 months to germinate but seedlings grow very quickly.

NOTES

The seeds are used as a fish poison due to a chemical saponin. There are about 40 Barringtonia species. The seeds contain Hydrocyanic acid and triterpene acids.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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