



PLANT FACT SHEET

Dichrostachys cinerea (L.) Wight et Arn

GENUS *Dichrostachys* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Marabou Thorn, Sickle bush

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Pods, Fruit, Gum, Spice

The ripe fruit and seeds are eaten. The seeds are used in soups.
The gum is eaten as a snack.

DESCRIPTION

A shrub or small acacia like tree. It grows 5-6 m high in dry areas and 12 m high in wetter places. The stems are often twisted and twined together. The side branches form spines. It loses its leaves during the year. The leaves are compound. There are 4-13 pairs of stalks each with 27 pairs of leaflets. The leaflets are narrow and 10 mm long by 3 mm wide. They are dark green and glossy above but dull underneath. The flowers are in spikes in the axils of leaves. Half the flower spike is sterile flowers and the other half are fertile. The flower spikes hangs downwards. The fruit is a cluster of pods. Each one is 10 cm long by 1 cm wide. They are twisted.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is more common at low altitudes. In East Africa it grows between sea level and 1,700 m altitude. It grows on a range of soils in wooded grassland. It grows in the Sahel. It needs an annual rainfall between 200-400 mm. It can form thickets on poor soils. It will grow in most well-drained soils. It needs an open sunny position. It is damaged by frost but can tolerate some drought. It can grow in salty soils. It can grow in arid places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

They can be grown from seed. The seed needs treatment before sowing. Hot water is poured over the seeds and left to soak for 24 hours before planting. Seeds germinate readily.
Plants can be grown from root cuttings.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It grows slowly. In Central African Republic plants have been recorded flowering in June and July.

NOTES

There are about 15-20 *Dichrostachys* species. The leaves are used in medicine. Also as Mimosaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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