



PLANT FACT SHEET

Vachellia tortilis (Forsk.) Galasso & Banfi

GENUS *Vachellia* FAMILY Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Umbrella thorn

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Seeds, Gum, Pods, Bark, Leaves

The gum is eaten.

The bark is used as a snack and thirst quencher.

The fruit are cooked.

DESCRIPTION

A flat topped shrub or tree. It grows to 4-21 m tall depending on rainfall. The crown occurs in layers. It is flat and spreading. The bark is grey brown and cracked when mature. It tends to shoot from the base rather than have a distinct trunk. It has two kinds of spines. Some are long and hooked and others are straight and long. The leaves are divided twice. There are 2-10 pairs of small leaflets. The stalk is only 2-4 cm long. The flowers are cream coloured round heads. The fruit are yellow to brown pods. These hang in dense bunches. The pods are twisted. Each pod has up to 10 brown seeds.

HABITAT

It grows in Mediterranean and tropical places. It is common all over Africa. It does best on alkaline soils. It grows in hot dry areas. Some forms have salt tolerance. It is drought resistant and cold tolerant. It grows between sea level and 2,000 m above sea level. It grows in areas with an annual rainfall between 50-1,000 mm. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 9-11.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is grow from seed. The seeds germinate slowly and only some seed germinate. The seed coat is very hard. To assist seed to grow they should be soaked in hot water then allowed to cool and soak overnight for 24 hours. Seed can be stored for a long time and will still grow. The plant can be cut back and will re-grow.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It grows slowly. In Kenya pods are available September to November.

NOTES

There are about 1,350 Acacia species. Over 1,000 occur in Australia. Also as Mimosaceae.

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