



PLANT FACT SHEET

Hyphaene petersiana Kirk.

GENUS *Hyphaene* FAMILY Arecaceae

COMMON NAMES Doum palm, Vegetable ivory palm

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Nuts, Bud, Sap, Fruit, Seeds, Sprouts

The flower bud can be tapped for sap used to make wine. The stem is tapped near the growing tip and the sap used to make wine. (It kills the palm).

The palm heart is edible. The core of young trunks can be used as a vegetable.

The layer around the fruit is eaten raw. The young fruit are boiled and eaten.

The nut or kernel is soaked and eaten raw.

The 'milk' like coconut milk can be drunk.

DESCRIPTION

A tall usually unbranched palm. The trunk is usually swollen in the middle. It is woody and 15-20 m tall. The crown is made up of fan shaped leaves. The leaves are large and fan shaped and grey-green. They are folded along the centre and deeply divided into fine stiff segments. The leaves are 2 m across. The leaf stalk is 1.3 m long. The leaf stalk has thorns which curve backwards. The bases of the leaflets are unequal. The flowers are of separate sexes on separate trees. The male flowers are produced in short tangled spikes amongst the leaves. The female flowers are larger than the male and have short stalks. The fruit are round and borne in clusters. The fruit can be 4-5 cm across or larger. They have a hard shiny brown shell. The base of the fruit is not narrowed. The fruit have a layer of sweet, edible flesh around a hard bony kernel. The kernel can be soaked then eaten.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in tropical southern Africa. It grows in open savannah and along streams and rivers. It can grow in salty soil. It can re-grow after fire. It grows between 275-1,300 m above sea level. It can grow in arid places. It grows in Miombo woodland in Africa. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seeds.

Harvesting and Seed Production

For sap, all the leaves are removed and the stem tip cut at an angle to start the sap flowing. The flow can be continued for 7 weeks by regularly cutting. The yield can be 8-60 litres. One tree can produce 20 to 50 kg of fruit.

NOTES

There are about 9 or 10 *Hyphaene* species. (Some authorities estimate 40).

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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