



PLANT FACT SHEET

Carnegiea gigantea (Engelm). Britt. & Rose.

GENUS *Carnegiea* FAMILY Cactaceae

COMMON NAMES Saguaro Cactus, Giant cactus

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Seeds, Seeds - oil

The fruits are processed (i.e. dried, fermented, canned) and stored for year-round use.

Seeds, rich in fat, are ground for use as flour and in porridges. The seed can be turned into a paste.

The fruit can be used for syrup or made into conserve.

The fruit are eaten. The red pulp of the fruit can be eaten fresh.

The seeds are ground into flour and used in soups, sweetmeats and as a buttery paste on tortillas.

The seed also produce an edible oil.

DESCRIPTION

A giant cactus. It is erect and like a tree. It can be 15 m tall. The trunk can be 60 cm across. The plant can weigh many thousands of kilograms. There are 12-24 ribs with spines grouped about 2 cm apart. There are 12 or more spines in a group and they are 2 cm long. In the centre there are 3-6 brown spines which are 7-8 cm long. The flowers are at the ends of the branches. The flowers are white in the centre and green on the outside. They are about 12 cm across and long. The flowers come out at night. The fruit are up to 8 cm long. They have red pulp and shiny black seeds.

HABITAT

A subtropical plant. Mature plants will tolerate temperatures down to -7°C. It needs temperatures from 5-30°C. Seedlings need protection from cold. They can tolerate intense heat and sun. They must have acid soil. It suits hardiness zones 9-11. Hobart Botanical Gardens. It can grow in arid places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is grown only from seed. The seedlings have few branches and many spines. It can also be grown from cuttings.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is slow growing. It grows at 20 cm per year. It may only flower after reaching 3.5 m high. The fruit fall naturally and are dried by the sun and collected. They can be stored. The fruit ripen in one month.

NOTES

There is only one *Carnegiea* species. (It is often shown as scenery in movies.)

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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