

Annona muricata

Annonaceae

West Indies, Tropical America

Am: *Ambeshok*

Eng: *Soursop*

Ecology

A fruit tree planted throughout the warm tropics at low altitudes. In Ethiopia, it is commonly grown in Dire Dawa. It is suited to upper ranges of the Dry, Moist and Wet Kolla agroclimatic zones, 900–1,500 m. Of several *Annona*, this species has the largest fruit, 1–4 kg in weight, but normally much less. In drought conditions, the tree may lose its leaves. Generally, in the tropics there is no lower limit. Could grow at lower altitudes e.g. in Gamu Gofa or Gambella. Dry Bereha agroclimatic zones are too dry for it.

Uses

Food (fruit), drink, medicine, ornamental, insecticide, fish poison.

Description

A slender evergreen tree 5–7 m in height, usually less, with a bole, which may be 30 cm in diameter, the branches very low and wide, giving an open shady crown. BARK: Grey with a pattern of shallow grooves. LEAVES: Alternate, dark green, shiny and leathery 8–15 cm long, oval with a sharp tip, dull or yellowish below where there are small pits in vein axils. Crushed leaves have a strong, unpleasant smell. FLOWERS: Solitary and large, 2–5 cm across, often opposite leaves and hanging down, 3 outer fleshy petals, curved, almost triangular, 3 inner yellow-green petals,

thinner and rounded, edges overlapping. FRUIT: Kidney or heart-shaped to 25 cm long, the leathery dark green skin covered with soft curved spines. Inside woolly white fibrous pulp covers many large brown-black seeds. (Single fruits grow together making one “compound” fruit, but the outline of individual fruits can be seen on the skin, each with its own spine. As pollination is often incomplete the fruit may have a distorted shape.)

Propagation: Seedlings.

Seed

Treatment: Not necessary.

Storage: Can be stored for several months but should not be dried to a moisture content of less than 5%.

Management

Regular weeding, mulching, manage crown above 1 m to encourage branching.

Remarks

A desirable tree in home gardens. Its delicious fruit can earn good money and is used for juice and ice-cream. However, each tree rarely produces more than a dozen fruits, which take 3 months to ripen, and are often attacked by birds such as mousebirds. All parts have insecticidal properties and can be used to kill fish — fruits can be used as baits. A powder or oil from the seeds kills lice and bedbugs. Contact with the eyes causes irritation. In Ethiopia, it is cultivated at Lege-hare in Dire Dawa.

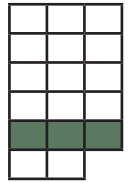




Photo: Patrick Maundu

