

Dovyalis caffra

Flacourtiaceae

South Africa

English: Kei apple

Ecology: A spiny shrub of open bush and wooded grassland in the Cape and Natal Provinces of South Africa, but it has been widely planted from coast to highland in tropical and subtropical areas as an effective fruiting hedge. It prefers well-drained soils but tolerates loamy clay and is very drought-resistant once established; from coast to highlands. The spines make the hedge almost goat-proof. It has fairly recently been introduced to Eastern Province.

Uses: Food (fresh fruit or as jam), bee forage, ornamental, **live fence**.

Description: A thorny evergreen shrub 3–5 m. **BARK:** grey and smooth when young; **strong thorns, single and straight to 6 cm**. **LEAVES:** shiny dark green to 5 cm, often in tight clusters, tip rounded. **FLOWERS:** male and female plants—both required for fruit. Flowers cream-green in dense clusters, many stamens and no petals. **FRUIT:** round, to 4 cm when ripe, orange-yellow, soft sweet flesh; seeds up to 20 in a fruit.

Propagation: Seedlings, direct seeding.

Seed: No. of seeds per kg: 27,000–47,000; 50 kg of fruit yield 1 kg of seed.

treatment: Not necessary.

storage: Seed loses viability within 3 months after picking.

Management: Trim regularly to maintain a good hedge. Best planted in two staggered rows with 20 cm between the plants and 30 cm between the rows to produce a good fence.

Remarks: The plant has shallow spreading roots which compete with crops. Hedges take time to grow. Seeds are best obtained from rotting fruit. Male and female plants cannot be distinguished at seedlings stage.

