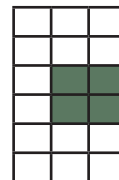


Ensete ventricosum

(*E. edule*)

Musaceae



Indigenous

Ag: *Gangi*

Am: *Enset, Guna-guna, Koba*

Eng: *Wild banana*

Gr: *Aset, Koba*

Hd: *Wesa*

Kf: *Kocho*

Km: *Wese*

Or: *Koba, Weke, Wese, Worke*

Wt: *Uta, Yecha*

Ecology

Like the common banana, this fleshy perennial which is tree-like is a giant herb. Outside Ethiopia it also grows in Cameroon, the Sudan, East and Central Africa and south to South Africa. In Ethiopia, it grows in wet upland valleys and ravines and along streams in the forests of lower mountain slopes, 1,000–2,700 m. In south-central Ethiopia enset is extensively cultivated for food up to 3,000 m in Moist and Wet Weyna Dega and Dega agroclimatic zones in nearly all regions.

Uses

Food (stems, rootstock), medicine (stem decoction), ornamental, soil conservation, fibres (stem, leaf, midrib), thatch (leaves), beads (seeds).

Description

A leafy herb 6–12 m, swollen below, the “false stem” formed by the leaf bases. LEAVES: Large leaves grow in spirals, each one to 6 m long and 1 m wide, bright green with a thick pink-red midrib and a short red stalk. The leaf blades tear with

age. FLOWERS: In large hanging heads 2–3 m long, the white flowers with 1 petal protected by large dark red bracts, 5 stamens produce sticky pollen. FRUIT: Although the small yellow clusters look like normal bananas they are not edible. Each leathery fruit, about 9 cm long, contains many hard seeds, brown-black to 2 cm long with only a thin layer of pulp. The whole plant dies down after fruiting.

Propagation

Suckers are normally used, but seedlings can be raised too.

Seed

Seed are contained in the finger-like fruit and freed on ripening.

Treatment: No treatment required.

Management

Fast growing.

Remarks

Ensete differs from *Musa*, the true banana, in the terminal head of flowers, its large seed and by dying after fruiting. The leaf blades make a good durable thatch and the midrib a strong fibre for rope or sacking. A meal or flour is made from the pulp inside the stem and rootstock. Pollination is commonly brought about by bats transferring the sticky pollen.

