

Strychnos spinosa

Loganiaceae



Indigenous

Am: *Merenz*

Eng: *Natal orange, Spiny monkey orange*

Tg: *Gura, Lokua*

Sm: *Delebdoi, Deleddor*

Ecology

A semi-evergreen shrub found all over tropical Africa. It grows in a wide variety of dry woodland and savanna forests, frequently on sandy soils of river banks. In Ethiopia, it grows in Dry, Moist and Wet Kolla agroclimatic zones in Ilubabor, (600—700 m). Tigray, Shoa, Somaliland and Illubabor.

Uses

Firewood, charcoal, timber (furniture, boxes), food (fruit), medicine (fruit, leaves, bark, roots), fodder (leaves), musical instruments (dry fruit shell).

Description

A semi-deciduous thorny tree, often multi-stemmed, 2–5 m, up to 9 m, crown rounded. BARK: Grey-brown, rough, with black-tipped thorns, short and hooked, in pairs, along the branches. LEAVES: Opposite, oval to round, to 10 cm, shiny green and leathery, edge wavy, 3–5 veins from the base. FLOWERS: Small, cream-green-white, in bunches at the end of branches. FRUIT: Round and woody, green then yellow-brown when ripe, to 12 cm across, conspicuous and hanging many months on the tree, 10–100 flat seeds lie in juicy, rather acid but edible flesh.

Propagation

Seedlings.

Seed

The fruit has a hard coat that needs to be cracked to extract the seed. About 1,800 seed per kg.

Treatment: Immerse in hot water, allow to cool and soak for 24 hours, macerate it to release the seeds.

Storage: Can be stored. Protect from stem borer insects.

Management

Produces root suckers from exposed roots or injured roots.

Remarks

Although the fruit is edible, seeds are toxic and unripe fruit may be also. The fruits are often eaten by wild animals. The wood is straight grained and planes well.



Photo: Patrick Maundu

