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Marula



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Department:
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Marula

Scientific name: *Sclerocarya caffra*.

Common names (including names used by different communities in South Africa):

Inkanyi, marula, umganu, mufula, morula

Origin and distribution

Marula is widely distributed from Ethiopia to South Africa. It is native in the following countries: South Africa, Malawi, Namibia, Niger, Botswana, Gambia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Swaziland, Zaire, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania (including Zanzibar), Angola and Uganda.

Production areas in south africa

The marula tree is found widely in many of South Africa's game parks and the rural communities of Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga. It is more dominant in the Ba-Phalaborwa in the Limpopo Province.

Description

Marula is a deciduous tree up to 18 m tall with a round to spreading crown.

THE BARK

The marula tree bark is pale in colour while the branches are silver-grey. The bark peels off in disc-shaped flakes, giving the trunk a mottled appearance. The interior bark is red or pink with darker stripes.

THE LEAVES

The leaves are petiolated and occur in 3 to 8 opposite pairs at the end of branches. The leaves have sharply pointed leaflets.

THE FLOWER, FRUIT, STONE AND KERNEL

Flowers are arranged in a bunch, 5 to 8 cm long. Female and male flowers are separate, on the same tree or on different trees (dioecious).

The plum-sized fruit has a thick, yellow peel and translucent white flesh. The flesh clings onto its brown stone and is very fibrous and juicy. The ripe fruit has a characteristic turpentine flavour. Inside the woody stone are two to three oblong kernels. Each kernel is protected by a small bony 'lid,' which becomes detached when the stone is cracked.

Climatic and soil requirements

TEMPERATURE

Marula tree is highly sensitive to frost and grows best in frost-free areas under warm conditions. If planted in areas where there is mild or occasional frost, it must be protected at least during the first few growing seasons. It would be wise to plant it on the northern side of a building where there is always enough light.

WATER

The tree occurs naturally, fairly drought resistance and is usually rain fed. It is found in arid and semiarid areas with a (mostly summer) rainfall varying from 250 to 1 000 mm. In South Africa the plant is best suited to the 250 to 800 mm rainfall zone.

SOIL

The tree occurs naturally in various types of woodland, on sandy soil or, occasionally, sandy loam. It is highly salt tolerant..

Cultivation practices

PROPAGATION

Marula is raised from seeds but propagation is

achieved through cuttings or grafting.

Planting

Seeds should be placed on damp fluffy peat moss at room temperature for about a week or two. It can grow from a truncheon planted in the early spring.

Pests control

Fruitfly, red marula caterpillar (*Mussidia nigricornis*), marula beetle: coleopteran, Family: Chrysomelidae) and marula moth feed on fresh marula leaves and fruit. Early removal and destruction of fruit with fruitfly damage is recommended.

Harvest at maturity

They produce flowers from September to November and bear fruit from January to March. In middle of the rainy season February to March the marula fruit begin to drop from the trees in large quantities. The fruit is then still pale green, and ripen on the ground to a pale, waxy yellow colour around January to March or April. The fruit is normally collected after falling. Ripe marula fruit is collected from the wild by hand.

Uses

Ripe fruit can be eaten fresh but most is processed into marula beer, fresh juice,, jam and jellies. The marula has a truly delicious nut, which is rich in protein and contains about 50 % oil. Fruit and leaves are a source of fodder and the tree provides shade and acts as a wind- break and source of firewood.

Medicinal uses includes a decoction of the bark to treat dysentery and diarrhea.