

GUMBO LIMBO

Gomie', Turpentine Tree, Tourist Tree, Gumbtree, Gum Elm, West Indian Birch

Bursera simaruba

Burseraceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

Gumbo Limbo is a very hardy, fast growing tree native to the West Indies and Central America. At maturity it reaches 30 m (100 ft). It is tolerant to long periods of drought and is easily propagated.

Uses

The most beneficial uses of the Gumbo Limbo tree are: as a living fence, as an anchor in erosion control, as a windbreak and as a nectar source. It provides quick shade and is attractive for its copper-colored thin bark that peels off to show the green underneath. The wood is easy to work with when making furniture. It makes useful but poor quality fuel. The tree produces an aromatic resin used as incense, for varnish and household glue. The flowers, leaves, young shoots and fruits are eaten by monkeys and occasionally by goats and cattle.

Cultivation

- Elevation: Up to 1000 m (3280 ft)
- Rainfall: 500-3000 mm (20-120 in)
- Soil types: Many types of soils are appropriate, even with some salinity.
- Temperature range: 18-25° C (64-77° F)

Harvesting and Seed Production

The Gumbo Limbo tree produces tiny green flowers, clusters of small fruits and seed pods. Cuttings 1.5-3 m (60-120 in) long and 10-15 cm (4-6 in) thick, spaced 3 m (117 in) apart will root easily to start a living fence. Stumps will regenerate quickly and seeds germinate in moist soil. Seeds will be viable for 10 months if kept cool, dry and dark.

Cooking and Nutrition

All parts of the tree are resinous and may be slightly toxic, hence, not suitable for food. It does have some medicinal uses.