

BAOBAB

Baobab, African Baobab, Cream Of Tartar Tree, Monkey Bread Tree, Upside Down Tree

Adansonia digitata

Malvaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

Baobab trees are large, robust trees that originate from Africa and are found in arid to semi-arid areas. The trees typically grow up to 20-30 meters (m) tall with a diameter of 2-10 m. The tree is mostly grown for its sour fruit and leaves, which are known to be notably nutritious. It is also traditionally very important as a medicinal source.

Uses

The fruit pulp can be eaten or made into a beverage, and the leaves can be used in many dishes. The flowers and leaves also are nutritious and high in protein for livestock. Additionally, almost all parts of the Baobab have been used medicinally. The wood is not particularly good for timber but can be used for fiber to make goods such as rope, clothing, or fishing nets.

Cultivation

- **Elevation** - 1-1500 m
- **Rainfall** - Prefers between 300-800 mm
- **Soil Types** - Can tolerate a wide range, but prefers well-drained acidic (pH < 6.5) soil
- **Temperature Range** - Mean annual temperature of 20-30°C. Can tolerate higher temperatures, but does not survive well with frost.
- **Day Length Sensitivity** - Not a significant factor
- **Light** - Prefers full sun

Harvesting and Seed Production

The fruit ripens on the tree and can be plucked from the top of the tree or from the ground after it has fallen. The seeds can be air dried and stored in clean, dry places away from moisture and pests. Scarification or boiling (for 20 to 25 minutes) improves germination of these seeds. Baobab can also be propagated by stem cuttings. To establish a baobab "garden" for leaf production, plant seeds (or transplanted seedlings) at a spacing of about 30 by 40 centimeters. Resulting trees produce easily-accessible leaves that can be harvested frequently. Protect baobab gardens from animal grazing and fire.

Pests and Diseases

The most common pests found attacking Baobabs are cotton bollworms, cotton-stainer bugs, and flea beetles.

Cooking and Nutrition

The fruit pulp is known for its high levels of vitamin C, but it also contains high levels of protein, fiber, amino-acids, calcium and magnesium. The seeds can be roasted and are high in protein. The leaves can be eaten dried or cooked like spinach and they contain high levels of protein, amino-acids, calcium, magnesium, manganese, and vitamin A.

References

O'Bar, Schoo. 2013. *Alternative Crops For Drylands*. Santa Barbra, CA: Amaigabe Press.

Williams, J.T. and M. Sidibe. 2002. *Baobab Adansonia digitata L.* Chichester: RPM Reprographics.

ECHO Development Notes (Issue 103) "[Baobab Gardens for Leaf Production](#)"

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