

Morinda citrifolia L.

Family:
Rubiaceae

Linnaeus, C. von (1753) *Species Plantarum* 2: 176. Type: Habitat in India.

Common name:

Indian Mulberry; Great Morinda; Leichhardt's Tree; Canary-wood; Rotten Cheesefruit; Tookoonja; Cheese Fruit; Cheesefruit

Stem

Seldom exceeding 30 cm dbh. Outer blaze orange-brown.

Leaves

Leaf blade rather large, about 18-25 x 12-13 cm. Stipules quite large, broad at the base and abruptly contracted into a tip or rounded at the apex. Domatia are tufts of hairs. Older twigs almost square in transverse section, bark pale, somewhat corky.

Flowers

Calyx tube +/- smooth at the apex or the lobes virtually indistinguishable. Corolla tube almost as long as the corolla lobes, lobes about 3-7 mm long. Corolla tube densely hairy towards the apex on the inner surface. Stigma 2-lobed.

Fruit

Ripe fruit has a strong odour like rotten blue vein cheese. Fruits about 4-7 x 3-4 cm, marked by the circular scars of the calyx tubes. Seeds numerous, rather variable in size and shape, but frequently about 6 mm long.

Seedlings

Cotyledons oblong or ovate, about 15-20 mm long. At the tenth leaf stage: leaf blade elliptic or elongate-elliptic, upper surface glabrous, undersurface with domatia (tufts of hair) along either side of the midrib; stipules interpetiolar, triangular, about 6 x 4 mm. Roots orange when fresh. Seed germination time 43 to 52 days.

Distribution and Ecology

Occurs in WA, NT, CYP, NEQ and CEQ. Altitudinal range from sea level to 150 m. Usually grows in beach forest just above high tide mark but also found in monsoon forest. Also occurs in Asia, Malesia and the Pacific islands.

Natural History & Notes

An attractive small tree that is sometimes cultivated. The leaves are large and dark green. The flowers are small, white and perfumed. The fruits are reported as edible but the odour of ripe fruits preclude consumption.

This species may have medicinal properties.

This species has been used medicinally in India and the Pacific islands. The fruits are regarded as a contraceptive. Cribb (1981).

Synonyms

Morinda citrifolia var. *typica* Domin, *Bibliotheca Botanica* 89(4): 1178 (1928).

RFK Code

432



Flowers. © CSIRO



Fruit, side view and cross section.

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Scale bar 10mm. © CSIRO



10th leaf stage. © CSIRO



Cotyledon stage, epigeal



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