



ACKEE

(Blighia sapida)

The ackee is a West African tree, the seeds of which are used there for playing a game. It was named after Captain Bligh a famous British explorer who it is said brought the plant to Jamaica. However, some persons believe that the ackee was brought to the island by a botanist called Thomas Clarke or maybe by other unknown individuals - probably a slave. Captain Bligh did take the ackee with him from Jamaica to Europe.

The tree is medium-sized and can grow to over 15 m in height. The leaves are compound and hang on opposite sides of the long stalks which carry them. The trees flower and fruit for most of the year. The flowers are small, fragrant and cream coloured. They are the source of a Ghanaian perfume. When young the fruit is green and becomes orange-red as it matures. When mature the fruit opens revealing three hard, round black seeds attached to three yellow-white fleshy arils.

The arils are the edible portions, but if eaten before the fruit opens they will be poisonous. There are two types of arils, "cheese" or hard type and the "butter" or soft type. When boiled the hard type is firmer to the touch. The aril consists mainly of water but protein, fat, carbohydrates, minerals and vitamins are present.

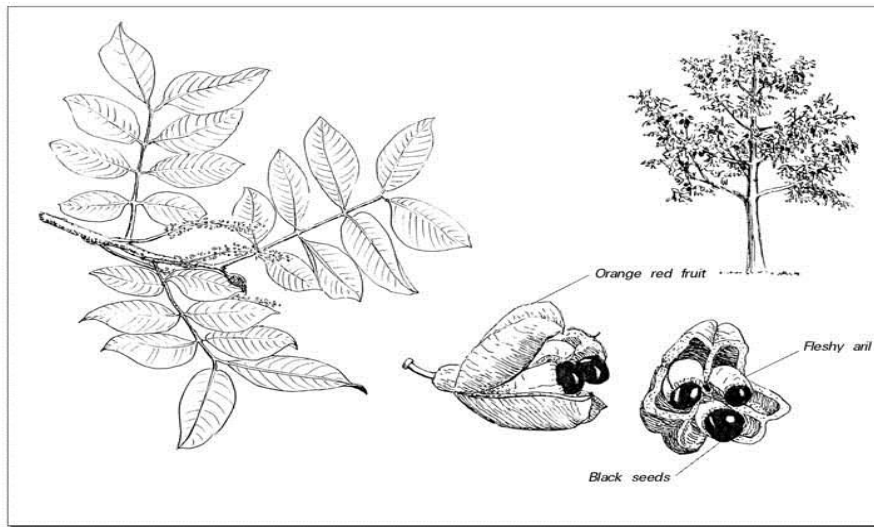
Ackee is Jamaica's national fruit. The national dish is ackee and saltfish, preferably made with salted cod. Much of this cod has always come from places like Nova Scotia, Eastern Canada. It was imported to feed the slaves. Jamaica is the only country that eats cooked ackee as a standard meal. Ackee is grown mainly for local consumption although canned ackee is exported.

"Vomiting sickness" is associated with the eating of unopened ackee. Unopened ackee contains Hypoglycin A, which is an amino acid that lowers blood sugar. To be safe therefore, ackees should be picked when opened.



ACKEE (*Blighia sapida*)

Family: Sapindaceae	Species: <i>Blighia sapida</i>	Author: Konig
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Height: 15m	Habitat: Cultivated	Persistence: Evergreen
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