

Irvingia gabonensis

[Synonyms : *Irvingia barteri*, *Mangifera gabonensis*]

DIKA NUT is a deciduous tree. Native to western Africa (especially Gabon) it has smelly, mango-like yellow fruit.

It is also known as African bush mango, African mango seed, African mango tree, African wild mango, *Afurika mango no ki* (Japanese), *Andok* (Cameroonian), *Arbol chocolate* (Spanish), *Biri* (Hausa), *Bobo* (French, Gabon, Sierra Leonean), *Boboru* (Ivorian), Bread tree, Bush mango, Dika bread tree, *Dika du Gabon* (French), *Dikanuss* (German), Dikka, Duiker nut, Gaboon chocolate, *Goron* (Hausa), *Irvingia* (Spanish), *Mangue du Gabon* (French), *Manguier du Gabon* (French), *Manguier sauvage* (French), *Meba* (Zairean), *Mueba* (Zairean), Native mango, *Oba* (French, Gabon, Nigerian), *Odika* (French), *Oro* (Yoruba), *Sioko* (French, Ivory Coast), *Wanini* (Ivorian), *Wilder Mangobaum* (German), Wild mango, and Wild mango nut.

The greenish-brown or orange-yellow dika wood becomes greyish-brown to white upon exposure to air.

An oil is extracted from the seeds.

Gabonensis means ‘of or from Gabon’.

The fruit are a familiar sight in local markets and the level of trade in them in Nigeria at the turn of the 20th/21st Centuries was sufficient to warrant quotation on weekly commodity lists there. At this time in addition to extensive regional trading between countries in Central and West Africa, the processed kernels have also been exported to North America and Europe (especially to countries on those Continents that are home to African immigrants). Further recognition of dika nut’s importance is also illustrated by its inclusion in genebanks established by African researchers whose remit includes the identification of cultivation methods to meet quality controls being placed on the fruit produced by farmers and new uses for the tree (particularly where the seed oil is concerned) in industrial applications and pharmaceuticals.

The flesh is nutritious and fresh fruit are eaten raw. The oily seeds are eaten like nuts or used in the form of a paste as a flavouring for savoury food and in Nigeria especially for thickening soups. The paste from the mashed kernels is known as Dika bread or Gabon chocolate – and the fat from the seeds (which is eaten locally) is called Dika butter or Dika fat and is said to be comparable to cocoa butter (*Theobroma cacao*). The kernels are also used to make flour.

Fruit are harvested in the wild by the Baka tribe.

The durable and very hard wood has been used for railway sleepers, street paving and local building, as well as for fuel.