PLANT FACT SHEET

Solanum nigrum L.

GENUS *Solanum* **FAMILY** Solanaceae

COMMON NAMES Blackberried nightshade

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Leaves, Vegetable, Flowers

The young fruit are cooked and eaten. They are also used for soup. They can be stewed or made into pies, jams, preserves, puddings, sauces, pastry and a spicy relish. They are also used for chutney. Ripe fruit are eaten raw. The leaves and young shoots and flowers are eaten cooked. They should be BOILED. The harvested leaves can be stored for 2-3 days.
CAUTION: The fruit can contain the alkaloid Solanine probably when unripe. This gets destroyed with boiling.

DESCRIPTION

An erect branched smooth herb. It grows about 60-100 cm high. The stems are green and 3 angled. Leaves are pointed at both ends. The leaves are 1.3-9 cm long by 0.5-6 cm wide. They are oblong and taper to the tip. They can have wavy lobes. The inner ring of petals are white and about 8 mm across. The fruit are black, smooth and round. They hang downwards.

Some people claim it is possibly now Solanum americanum. The difference seem to be about how shiny the fruit are!

HABITAT

It is a temperate and tropical climate plant. They occur in waste places at low and medium altitudes throughout the country. It grows from sea level up to high altitudes such as 2700 m in the tropics. It often comes up self sown after fires. It is grown in most tropical countries as a green leafy vegetable. It occurs between 600-3000 m in southern China. In Nepal it grows to about 2900 m altitude. It can grow in areas with an annual rainfall below 500 mm. It can grow in arid places. Tasmania Herbarium. In Sichuan and Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is grown from seed. In the tropical highlands areas it is almost always self sown or encouraged by burning grassland but then weeded and harvested as a normal component of the garden. In coastal areas seeds are sown by broadcasting. Good yields can be obtained under moderate fertility levels. A spacing of 40 cm x 40 cm is suitable. Topping encourages branching. It can be grown from cuttings.
Plants are also grown in nurseries and transplanting.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Seeds germinate about a week after planting. Leaves can be harvested after about 8-10 weeks by cutting off the last 5 cm of each branch. High yields can be obtained. 5-8 harvests over 6-8 weeks are possible.
Solanum nigrum grows rapidly, has high seed production and high viability of seed. This gives it a competitiveness as a weedy species but also means it is one of the first harvested edible greens from a new garden.

Planting instructions

Blackberried nightshade

Scientific name: Solanum nigrum

The plant.

This is a small upright herb or shrub with somewhat angular stems. It has many branches and produces white flowers and then black berries.

Naming.

Even the English name Blackberried nightshade creates problems because many Europeans believe this plant is poisonous. Scientists have also had trouble correctly naming this plant because several similar plants with different numbers of chromosomes have sometimes been given the same name and sometimes given different names.

Plant (number chromosomes) Scientific name
Diploid (2 sets) Solanum nodiflorum
Triploid (3 sets) Solanum luteum
Hexaploid (6 sets) Solanum nigrum

Scientists are still studying and trying to correctly name the plant. Nevertheless in many tropical countries this plant is grown and used as a food plant.

One of the more common local names in Papua New Guinea is karakap which comes from the Tolai language and is now almost the Tok Pisin name.

NOTES

There are about 1400 Solanum species. Demo Chemical composition (fruit, Chinese sample): Protein = 2.51%. Fat = 0.56%. Carbohydrate = 5.66%. Ash 1.19%. Leaves may contain a toxic element. Seeds may be above-average for angiospermous plants in the amino acids Alanine, Phenylalanine, and Threonine.
In The Plant List it has this as a synonym of Solanum americanum. It is high in proVitamin A.

PICTURES



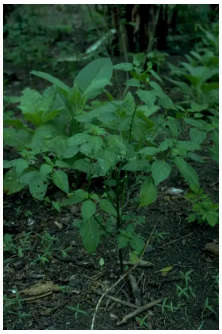
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