PLANT FACT SHEET

Hibiscus tiliaceus L.

GENUS *Hibiscus* **FAMILY** Malvaceae

COMMON NAMES Cotton Tree, Beach Hibiscus, Country mallow, Sea hibiscus, Yellow mallow

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Roots, Flowers, Leaves, Bark, Sap, Fruit

Roots, flowers and young leaves can be eaten. The flowers can be dipped in batter and fried.
The leaves are also fermented into a sauce.
The bark, shoots and sap wood are recorded as eaten in New Caledonia.
The slimy sap and bark are eaten.
The stalks are sucked.
The shoots are stripped of their bark and burnt then the ashes added to dished for flavour.

DESCRIPTION

A tree which keeps its leaves throughout the year. It is small and spreading. It grows to 5-9 m tall and spreads to 3-6 m across. The stem is erect and short. The bark is grey and smooth. The branches spread widely. The crown has an open texture. The leaves are light green. They can be round or heart-shaped. They are 12 cm long. They are densely hairy underneath. They have a short pointed tip. The flowers are yellow and have a deep pink/purple centre. They are 12 cm across. They have 5 overlapping petals. The flowers are in the axils of the upper leaves. The fruit is a hairy partly woody capsule. It is 2 cm across and brown and splits open when ripe. It contains several small kidney shaped seeds. There are same named varieties. The plant varies a lot.

HABITAT

It grows in warm temperate regions. It can grow in the tropics and subtropics. It suits light soils in an open, sunny position. The soils are best to be well drained but moist. It is damaged by frost. It can tolerate drought and salt spray. It often grows naturally near the seashore. It grows along most tropical coasts in tidal forests. It will grow in soils with pH between 5.0 and 8.5. In Samoa it grows from sea level to 650 m altitude. It does not grow well on atolls. It grows on the edges of mangroves. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed or cuttings. Seed remain viable after floating in sea water for several months.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is a fast growing plant. Plants can be heavily pruned and will shoot again.

NOTES

There are about 300 Hibiscus species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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