



PLANT FACT SHEET

Cicer arietinum L.

GENUS *Cicer* FAMILY Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Chickpea

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Leaves, Roots - coffee, Vegetable

Mainly the ripe seeds are eaten. Often they are boiled and mashed.

The young leaves, shoots and pods are sometimes eaten. Sprouted seeds are eaten.

The seeds can be roasted, boiled or fried. They can be used in soups and stews. When roasted they can be eaten as a snack. It is used to make flour.

It is used in hummus, coucous, falafel, and used in pita bread. They are fermented into miso and tempeh.

The roasted roots and seeds are used as a coffee substitute.

DESCRIPTION

An annual legume herb. Plants are 40-60 cm high and all parts are hairy. It is erect with many branches. Plants are often bluish green in colour. Plants have a strong taproot. The root carries many nodules. The leaves are 5 cm long. It has leaves made up of 9-15 pairs of leaflets along a stalk and a single leaflet at the end. The leaflets are 1-2 cm long by 0.3-1.4 cm wide and strongly pointed and with a saw toothed edge. The flowers can be white, pink or purple. The flowers are carried singly on long stalks in the axils of leaves. The flowers normally never open and are self pollinated. The pods are inflated. Pods are 2-3 cm long and have 1 or 2 seeds. The seeds are angular and up to 1 cm across. They have a pointed beak. The seed colour can vary from brown, white, red or black. There are many named cultivated varieties.

HABITAT

A subtropical crop. It suits high altitudes in the tropics because it needs cold nights with dew. It is well suited to semi arid regions. It can tolerate salt and drought. It does not do well in warm, humid places. It needs well drained soil. It is damaged by frost. For best growth, night temperatures between 18-26°C and day temperatures of 21-29°C, are required. The temperature range of 8°C between day and night is required. Rainfall of 600-750 mm and a relative humidity of 20-40% is suitable. The best pH is 5.5-7.5 but they will grow on alkaline soils. In Nepal they are grown up to 1300 m altitude. In Ethiopia it grows between 1,600-2,200 m above sea level. It suits hardiness zones 8-11.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is grown from seed. Often other crops are grown mixed with chickpea but these are planted 3-4 weeks after sowing the chickpea. Seed should be at 2-12 cm depth. Seed will germinate at temperatures above 5°C but are best above 15°C. Spacing plants 10 cm apart in rows 25-30 cm apart is suitable if plants are put in rows. Plants are cut and harvested when leaves turn brown.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Yields of 400-1600 kg per hectare of seed, are average. Plants can reach maturity in 4.5-5 months but 7 months or longer, are taken for some types.

NOTES

There are about 38 *Cicer* species. It is used in homus and falafel.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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