PLANT FACT SHEET

Lepidium meyenii Walp.

GENUS *Lepidium* **FAMILY** Brassicaceae

COMMON NAMES Maca, Pepper grass, Pepper weed

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Tubers, Leaves, Roots

The small tubers are roasted or made into gruel.
The small leaves are edible.
The roots are used for salads, jams, bread, coffee substitute and beer.

DESCRIPTION

A herb in the mustard family with a turnip like root. It takes 2 years to complete its life cycle. It grows 12-20 cm high. It has a ring of 12-20 leaves near the base. They are oval in outline. There are lobes near the end. New leaves grow from the centre of the ring. The stems are short and lie along the ground. The flowers are whitish and about 0.5 cm long. They are on slender stalks. The fruit is 2 celled. The seeds are oval and 0.2 cm long. They are smooth and reddish. The flesh root structures are 2-5 cm long. They can be white or yellow, or with red or yellow markings.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is cultivated on small plots at high altitudes in Peru. It can tolerate strong winds and cold temperatures. It grows between 3,500 and 4,100 m altitude. It is very frost resistant. It grows in regions with temperatures below 0°C. It is probably a short day plant and probably does not form the root storage organs in cold high latitude places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is grown from seed. Seed is collected from specially selected plants Seedlings are transplanted. It takes 300 kg of seed for one hectare. Plants are sown at the beginning of the wet season. To produce seed, selected plants are placed in a hole 50-60 cm deep and after 25-30 days plantlets grown. These are then transplanted to grow into seeding plants after 6-7 months.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The crop takes 8-10 months to mature. The roots can be dried and stored for years. They are normally exposed to the sun for 4-6 days until they are dry. Yields between 2 and 15 tonnes per hectare occur depending on the care with production.

NOTES

There are about 150 Lepidium species.

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