PLANT FACT SHEET

Portulacaria afra (Linnaeus) Jacquin

GENUS *Portulacaria* **FAMILY** Portulacaceae

COMMON NAMES Jade plant, Elephant's food

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Vegetable

The leaves can be eaten raw. They are tart and used in small amounts in salads. They are a thirst suppresant.

DESCRIPTION

A small juicy leafed tree. It grows to about 1-4.5 m tall. The branches are grey and shiny. The new stems are reddish-brown. The roots are thick and clasp rocks. The leaves are flat and fleshy. They are simple and oval. They are slightly pointed and narrow to the base. They occur in opposite pairs at right angles down the twigs. The twigs are red. The leaves are edible. The flowers are star like and small. The flowers are pink or purple. The fruit is small and three winged. They are transparent and have a single seed inside. The leaves are edible.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in drier places. It can be damaged by frost. It can stand high temperatures. It grows in areas with an annual rainfall 250-750 mm. It grows between sea level and 1,000 m above sea level. It can grow in arid places. Melbourne Botanical Gardens. It suits hardiness zones 9-11.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from cuttings. One year old wood is best to use. The plants can be pruned into a hedge. Many branches on trees come into contact with the soil and form roots. These natural layers can be used for planting. They can also be grown from seed.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants grow quickly.

NOTES

There is probably only one Portulacaria species.
The leaves are claimed to increase nursing mother's milk supply.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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PROVIDED BY **Food Plants International**

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