



PLANT FACT SHEET

Eleusine coracana (L.) Gaertn.

GENUS *Eleusine* FAMILY Poaceae

COMMON NAMES Finger millet

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Shoots, Seeds, Cereal, Vegetable

The seed are eaten either roasted or ground into flour. This is used for porridge and flat bread.

Alcohol is brewed from the grain. Caution: Alcohol is a cause of cancer.

The leaves are also edible.

DESCRIPTION

A millet grass. It is an annual grass. It is robust and forms many tillers or young shoots from the base. It grows 40-120 cm tall. The stems are somewhat flattened. The leaves are narrow. The flower heads are made up of 2-7 finger like spikes. These spikes are 1.5 cm across and 10-15 cm long. These in turn have about 70 smaller spikes. Each one of these smaller spikes has 4-7 seeds. The seeds can be 1-2 mm across. The seeds are roughly rounded. The colour varies. There are coracana and africana subsp.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It is a very drought resistant crop. For good yields it needs good soil drainage and adequate moisture. It cannot stand water-logging. It becomes important where rainfall is 900-1250 mm. It especially suits areas with long hot summers. It needs a minimum temperature above 18°C and does best where temperatures are above 27°C. It grows from sea level to 2400 m altitude in Africa. It is a short day length plant and does best where daylength is 12 hours. In Nepal it is grown to about 2500 m altitude. In Kenya it grows from sea level to 2,400 m altitude. It can grow in arid places. In Sichuan and Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is grown from seed. Often plants are grown mixed with sorghum or maize. Good soil preparation is needed to reduce weed competition. Seed can be broadcast or drilled. Young plants need to be weeded and thinned. Seed viability drops to about 50 % after 2 years. Spacing of 5 cm apart in rows 30-33 cm apart or 10-12 cm apart in rows 25 cm apart are recommended. About 25-35 kg of seed per hectare are needed if seed are broadcast. 5-10 kg per hectare are required if seed are drilled. Using fertiliser can dramatically increase yield. 125 kg per hectare of sulphate of ammonia when plants are 15 cm high is used in Uganda.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is self pollinating and pollination occurs over 8-10 days. Millet seed stores very well and can be stored without damage for 10 years. Often it is stored on the head. Yields of about 450-900 kg of dried grain per hectare are usual. This can easily be increased to 1650 kg per hectare. Crops take 3-6 months until harvest. Seeds are heated before grinding.

NOTES

There are 9 Eleusine species. They are mostly in tropical Africa. Demo

PICTURES



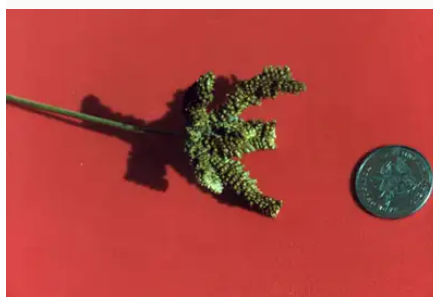
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