PLANT FACT SHEET

Portulaca oleracea L.

GENUS *Portulaca* **FAMILY** Portulacaceae

COMMON NAMES Purslane

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Seeds, Herb, Spice, Vegetable, Flowers, Stems

The stems and leaves are cooked and eaten. Usually the skin is scraped off then the plant is boiled and mashed. It thickens stews and other dishes in which it is cooked. It is used as a pot herb. It is used in soups.
The fleshy stems are pickled.
Sprouted seeds are eaten in salads. The seeds are ground for use in cakes and bread.
Caution: In areas where a lot of nitrogen fertiliser is used plants can cause nitrate poisoning. Plants can also have oxalates.

DESCRIPTION

A spreading branched herb. It lies flat on the ground. It grows each year from seed. The plants spread 10 to 50 cm wide. The stems are purplish. The leaves are fleshy, flat and shaped like a wedge at the base. They are 1.5 to 2.5 cm long and 0.3-1 cm wide. The flowers are yellow and occur in a few rounded heads. They are 0.8-1.5 cm across. They bloom about the middle of the day. The capsules are 0.5 cm long and oval. The seeds are black and shiny.

HABITAT

It grows in tropical and temperate regions. They are common in waste places throughout the Philippines. It is a common self sown plant in lowland areas and up to 1700 m altitude in the tropics. It grows to 2,400 m above sea level in Guatemala. It prefers sandy well drained places. It can grow on salty soils. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 7-12. Tasmania Herbarium. In Yunnan. In Sichuan. At ECHO.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It roots easily from broken pieces. It can be grown from stem cuttings. It can be grown from seed.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The first harvest of leaves can be a month after planting. In the tropics it can complete its lifecycle in 2-4 months. Often it is harvested in the dry season when other vegetables are in short supply.

NOTES

There are about 200 Portulaca species. They are mostly in the tropics and subtropics. Chemical composition: seeds are reported above-average for angiosperms for the amino acids Glycine and Tyrosine.
It has a C4 pathway.
It is rich in Omega-3's.

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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