PLANT FACT SHEET

Chenopodium album L.

GENUS *Chenopodium* **FAMILY** Amaranthaceae

COMMON NAMES Fat hen, Lamb's quarters

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Seeds, Sprouts, Flowers, Vegetable, Tea, Root

The seeds can be ground into flour. They contain saponin which should be leached out. They are used for bread, pancakes, muffins and biscuits.
The tender leaves are cooked and eaten as a vegetable. The leaves are chopped small before cooking. They are also used in stews and soups and in stir fries. The older leaves are boiled to remove the bitter taste then stir fried. They can be dried and stored for winter use.
Young flowers are cooked and eaten.
The sprouted seeds are edible.

DESCRIPTION

An annual plant. It grows to 1 m high and spreads to 1 m across. The stem is erect. The stems are succulent and without hairs. They often have soft mealy lumps which can be rubbed off. The leaves are simple, with one at each node, and occurring alternately up the stem. The leaves are oval and wedge shaped with saw like edges. They are 5-12 cm long by 3-10 cm wide. The leaf stalk is usually shorter than the leaf blade. The under surface of the leaf often has a white mealy layer which can be rubbed off. The flowers occur in dense white spikes. The flowers occur at the tip and ends of branches. The fruit is a pod. It is small and roundish and papery. It opens around the tip. The pod contains a shiny black seed. Seed are 1.2-1.8 mm across. Seeds can occur in very large numbers.

HABITAT

A temperate plant. It also grows in tropical places. It grows best on light to medium well drained soil. It suits an open sunny position but can tolerate shade. It is drought and frost resistant. It commonly occurs as a weed in old fields and waste places. In Papua New Guinea is only occurs in the high altitude zone (2,500 m). In Zimbabwe it grows between 1,100-1,600 m above sea level. In Nepal it grows to about 4000 m altitude. In the Indian Himalayas it grows between 1,200-2,300 m above sea level. It can grow in arid places. It can tolerate temperatures between 5°C and 30°C. Tasmania Herbarium. In Yunnan. In Sichuan. In Inner Mongolia.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Seedlings can be transplanted at a spacing of 30 cm. It does well in soils with lots of nitrogen. It is self sown and harvested from potato crops in India.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The tops can be eaten before and after flowering. They are harvested after 40 days.

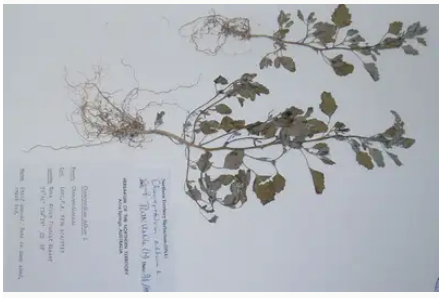
NOTES

There are about 100-150-250 Chenopodium species. They are mostly in temperate regions. Chemical composition (Chinese samples): Protein = 16.1%. Fat = 6.87%. Carbohydrate = 48.85%. Ash = 5.8%. (Leafy stems): Protein = 3.9%. Fat = 0.76%. Carbohydrate = 8.93%. Ash = 3.0%. Chemical composition (after Hooper): Water = 78.00% (fresh). Fat = 4.53% (dry). Albumenoids = 22.14% (dry). Carbohydrates = 40.22% (dry). Fibre = 7.60% (dry). Ash = 25.51% (dry). Nitrogen = 3.54% (dry). Phosphoric acid = 1.35% (dry). Silicates = 2.00% (dry). Analysis of non-Chinese seed samples indicates that the seeds are a promising plant protein source, with a balanced amino acid pattern close to that of the hen's egg. "One of the 18 most serious weeds in the world"! Also put in the family Chenopodiaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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