PLANT FACT SHEET

Laurus nobilis L.

GENUS *Laurus* **FAMILY** Lauraceae

COMMON NAMES Bay laurel, Sweet Bay

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Herb, Spice, Oil

Leaves are used raw or dried as flavouring in soups, stews and sauces. They are also used in stuffings and gravies.
The dried fruit and leaf oil are also used for flavouring.
Dried leaves are brewed into a herbal tea.
CAUTION: The berries are poisonous.

DESCRIPTION

An evergreen tree which grows 10-20 m high. It spreads to 2.5-5 m wide. The bark is smooth and grey. The leaves are alternate. The leaves are oval and shiny and dark green. They are 3-6 cm long. The leaves have wavy edges and are leathery. The flowers are small and yellowish green. Male and female flowers are on separate plants. The fruit are one seeded dark berries. They are 1 cm long.

HABITAT

It suits Mediterranean climates with hot dry summers and cool, wet winters. It needs full sunlight in cooler places but some shade in tropical places. It needs a rich well drained soil. It can tolerate dry conditions. In Melbourne Botanical Gardens. In Hobart Botanical gardens. It can handle light frosts. It can stand temperatures down to -15°C. It suits hardiness zones 8-11. Wittunga Botanical Gardens. In Sichuan and Yunnan. Arboretum Tasmania. In Portland Botanical Gardens.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are difficult to grow from seed. Fresh green shoots or tip cuttings are best for growing new plants. An 8 cm cutting from a mature plant should be used and some leaves removed. Dipping the root in root hormone will help. Cuttings may take 9 months to root and be ready for transplanting. Plants can also be grown by layering and by using suckers from the base. Plants can be pruned into a hedge.

Harvesting and Seed Production

A very slow growing tree. Leaves are picked early in the day throughout the year. They can be used fresh or dried. To dry leaves, they should be weighed down to prevent curling and dried in a dark, airy room. Dried leaves should be stored in sealed jars.

NOTES

There are 2 Laurus species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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