PLANT FACT SHEET

Phyllanthus acidus (L.) Skeels

GENUS *Phyllanthus* **FAMILY** Phyllanthaceae

COMMON NAMES Grosella, Otaheite gooseberry

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Leaves, Vegetable

The fruit is used cooked in preserves and pies. They are too sour to be eaten fresh. They are good for processing into pickles. They are used as a tamarind substitute to sour dishes.
The leaves are eaten as a vegetable. They are also used in chutney.

DESCRIPTION

A medium sized tree. It grows up to 2-10 m tall. It loses its leaves during the year. The leaves are smooth and 20-40 cm long and divided. The leaflets are light green and rounded at the base and pointed at the tip. The leaflets are alternate and pointed at the tip, rounded at the base and 2 to 7 cm long. Nodules develop on branches where leaves have fallen. Leaves tend to be clustered near the ends of branches. Flowers develop from these. Flowers are small and pink and crowded in clusters from these nodules. Male and female flowers are on separate trees. The fruit is medium sized, with 6 lobes, pale green but yellow when mature and sour. They are 1 to 1.5 cm across. The surface of the skin is smooth but the fruit are slightly ridged. It contains a bony hard grooved stone with 6-8 seeds.

HABITAT

They are a tropical plant. It can grow in the hot humid tropical lowlands. They suit areas with a seasonal dry period. In Nepal it grows up to 250 m altitude. They are widely distributed near towns and sometimes cultivated for the edible fruit. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 11-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Trees can be grown from seed. Trees can be grown by cleft grafting. They can also be grown from cuttings and air layering.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is fast growing. Trees produce after about 4 years. Fruiting occurs throughout the year. Fruit mature in 90-100 days.

NOTES

There are about 600-800 Phyllanthus species. They are mostly in the tropics. Fruit are very acid. There are 200 Phyllanthus species in tropical America. These were previously in the Euphorbiaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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