PLANT FACT SHEET

Acalypha wilkesiana Mull. Arg.

GENUS *Acalypha* **FAMILY** Euphorbiaceae

COMMON NAMES Painted copperleaf

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Flowers, Vegetable, Leaves - tea

The cooked young leaves are eaten. The leaves are rich in protein. They are used in stews.

DESCRIPTION

An evergreen shrub. It grows 3 m high and spreads 2 m across. The stem is erect with many branches. The branches have fine hairs. It has a closely arranged crown. The leaves are coppery green with red splashes of colour. This gives them a mottled appearance. The leaves are large and broad with teeth around the edge. They can be 10-20 cm long and 15 cm wide. The leaves are finely hairy. They can be flat or crinkled. The flowers are reddish in spikes at the end of branches. They have separate male and female flowers on the same plant. The male flowers are in long spikes which hang downwards while the female flowers are in short spikes. They do not show up easily as they are often hidden among the leaves. The flower stalks are 10-20 cm long.

HABITAT

A tropical and subtropical plant. A plant which grows naturally in Vanuatu. It occurs in the Pacific Islands. It prefers light well drained soil. It suits a protected shady position. It is damaged by both drought and frost. It needs a minimum temperature above 10°C. It can grow in arid places. It grows on atolls. It suits hardiness zones 9-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seeds. It can be grown from hardwood cuttings taken when growth is less vigorous. It forms a suitable hedge plant.

NOTES

There are over 450 Acalypha species. They are tropical. There are 225 in tropical America.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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