PLANT FACT SHEET

Poisonous

This plant, or parts of it, can be poisonous. Do not eat it unless you know which parts are safe and how they must be prepared.

Food Plants International: Seeds are poisonous.

Taxus baccata L.

GENUS *Taxus* **FAMILY** Taxaceae

COMMON NAMES Yew, Common yew, English yew

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Bark - tea

CAUTION: All parts except the seed coat are very poisonous.
The red and fleshy cup-shaped seed coat is eaten. It is used for desserts.
The bark is used for tea. It is dried and powdered then boiled with salt and refined butter (ghee).

DESCRIPTION

An evergreen tree. It can grow up to 20 m tall and spread 7.5-9 m wide. The trunk can be 100 cm across. The trunk is short. The bark is reddish-brown. It is rough and peels off in irregular papery scales. The leaves have short stalks and are 2.5-4 cm long. The leaves are in two ranks. They are linear and flattened. They are 10-30 mm long. There are 2 greyish bands beneath them. Male and female flowers are on separate trees. The male flower is yellow and the female flower is very small and green. The seed is enclosed in a scarlet cup-like aril or seed layer. Many cultivated varieties have been developed.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It will tolerate a wide range of conditions. They can grow on chalk soils. They can grow in shade. In Vietnam it grows above 1,500 m altitude. In Nepal it grows between 2200-3400 m altitude. It grows on exposed slopes. It suits hardiness zones 5-10. Arboretum Tasmania. Hobart Botanical gardens, Launceston Princess square.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. The seeds are very slow to germinate. They germinate more easily after having passed through the digestive system of birds.

Harvesting and Seed Production

In Sikkim fruit are available September to November.

NOTES

There are about 6-10 Taxus species. It is used for the anti-cancer drug Taxol.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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