



PLANT FACT SHEET

Cucurbita pepo L.

GENUS *Cucurbita* FAMILY Cucurbitaceae

COMMON NAMES Marrow, Pumpkin

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Seeds, Leaves, Vegetable, Flowers

The young fruit are cooked and eaten. They can be steamed, boiled or fried. They are used in pies, soups, stews and cakes.

The young leaves and the ripe seeds can also be eaten cooked.

The seeds are dried, salted and toasted and eaten as a snack food.

The seeds can also be pressed to produce oil. The sprouted seeds are used in salads.

Flowers and flower buds can be eaten boiled. They can be dried for later use.

DESCRIPTION

A bristly hairy annual vine in the pumpkin family. It has branched tendrils. The stems are angular and prickly. The leaves are roughly triangular. The leaves have 5 lobes which are pointed at the end and are toothed around the edge. Male and female plants are separate on the same plant. Male flowers are carried on long grooved flower stalks. Female flowers are borne on shorter more angular stalks. The fruit stalks have furrows along them but are not fattened near the stalk. The fruit vary in shape, size and colour. Often they are oval and yellow and 20 cm long by 15 cm wide. The seeds are smaller than pumpkin and easy to separate from the tissue. The scar at their tip is rounded or horizontal, not oblique. There are a large number of cultivated varieties.

HABITAT

A subtropical plant. They are more suited to drier areas. They are frost sensitive. It grows best with day temperatures between 24-29°C and night temperatures of 16-24°C. It suits tropical highland regions. In PNG it is best between 1,000 and 2,000 m above sea level. It suits hardiness zones 8-11.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

They are grown from seeds. The seeds germinate after one week. They can be grown from cuttings. They are best planted on mounds. A spacing of 2-3 m between plants is needed. Hand pollination assists fruit setting. Plants can also be grown from cuttings as plants root at the nodes.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The first usable immature fruit are ready 7-8 weeks after planting.

NOTES

There are 25 Cucurbita species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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