



PLANT FACT SHEET

Vigna vexillata (Benth.) A. Rich.

GENUS *Vigna* FAMILY Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Wild cowpea, Pencil yam

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Tuber, Seeds, Roots, Leaves

The tuberous roots are eaten raw or cooked. They can be boiled or roasted.

The young seeds are cooked and eaten.

The leaves can be eaten as a vegetable and also dried.

DESCRIPTION

A variable climbing herb. It keeps growing from year to year. It has a narrow woody rootstock. This is dull white and wrinkled. The vines are 30 cm to 3 m long. They are hairy. The leaves have 3 leaflets and these are oval or long. They can be 3-16 cm long by 0.4-8 cm wide. They taper towards the tip and are rounded at the base. The leaf stalk is 2-11 cm long. The flowering stalks are in the axils of leaves and have 2-6 flowers. The flowering stalk is 5-36 cm long. The pea like flower has a standard which is 2-3 cm long and not the same on both sides. Flowers are pink or purple. The keel is paler with a beak curved back at the end and twisted to one side. The fruit are pods which are held erect. They are 4-14 cm long by 3-4 mm wide and covered with short brown hairs. There are 10-18 seeds. The seeds are light brown to black. They are kidney shaped and 3-4 mm long by 2 mm wide.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It mostly grows naturally in open woodland on sandstone soils. It will grow in dry, acid, high aluminium soils that are infertile. It can grow in arid places. In Sichuan and Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed or tubers.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Seeds are produced about 90 days after planting.

NOTES

There are about 150 *Vigna* species. They are mostly in the tropics. The tubers have been shown to be 15% protein.

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