PLANT FACT SHEET

Use with caution

This plant can be harmful if it is eaten raw, in large amounts or without the right preparation. Read the whole fact sheet before use.

Crotalaria brevidens Benth.

GENUS *Crotalaria* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Slenderleaf rattlepod

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Leaves, Flowers, Vegetable

Caution: It is bitter due to Pyrrolizidine alkaloids. If eaten with corchorus or with milk it is less bitter.
The tender leaves are cooked and eaten as a vegetable. They are cooked with potash and have peanuts added to improve the flavour. Leaves can be dried and stored for later use.
The seeds are poisonous.

DESCRIPTION

A much branched herb. It lives for one or sometimes more years. It grows 2 m tall. The branches curve upwards and have soft hairs. The leaves are alternate. They have 3 leaflets. The leaf stalks are 2-6 cm long. The leaflets are narrow and 4-10 cm long by 1-2 cm wide. They are hairy underneath. The flowers are in a group at the top of the plant. These can be 50 cm long. There are many narrow flowers. They are yellow with red veins. The fruit is a narrow pod 4-5 cm long and 1 cm wide. It is slightly curved at the ends. There are many seeds that are 3 mm long and yellow to orange.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows between 500-2,700 m above sea level. It can grow in arid places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Seed germinate in 3-4 days. It responds well to natural compost and manures.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants are ready for harvesting after 8 weeks. Harvesting can continue for 4 months.

NOTES

There are about 550 Crotalaria species. They are mostly tropical. It suppresses Meloidogyne nematodes in the soil.

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