PLANT FACT SHEET

Dioscorea hispida Dennstaedt

GENUS *Dioscorea* **FAMILY** Dioscoreaceae

COMMON NAMES Bitter yam, Asiatic bitter yam

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Tubers, Root

The tubers are eaten after processing by slicing, soaking in running water for 48 hours and then cooking. They are dried and cooked with rice and other dishes.
CAUTION THIS YAM CAN BE VERY POISONOUS. NORMALLY SELECTED VARIETIES AND SPECIAL PROCESSES ARE NEEDED BEFORE IT IS USED.

DESCRIPTION

A yam. A climbing vine which can be quite long. It can be 10 m long. They twine to the left. There are thorns on the stem. It has compound leaves bearing 3 very large leaflets. The leaves can be 30 cm across. The leaflets are unequal on each side. The leaves are produced one after another along the stem. The young leaf stalks, stems and leaflets are hairy. The leaf stalk is as long as the leaflets (10-15 cm). There are small prickles on the under surface of the main vein. The flowers are small, pale yellow and borne on compound flower clusters. The fruit are 5 cm across and divided into 3 lobes. The tuber is covered with root hairs. It has lobes. Tubers are often 15-25 cm across.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. In the Philippines they occur in Mt Province and from Luzon to Basilan. Also common in central Luzon and northern Mindanao. Outside PNG it occurs in SE Asia and Indonesia. Plants grow from sea level to 1500 m altitude in Southern China. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It can be grown from a tuber. The tuber can continue to increase in size over several years.

NOTES

It contains the alkaloid dioscorine which is poisonous so it needs to be treated before eating. There are about 650 species of Dioscorea.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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