



PLANT FACT SHEET

Setaria italica (L.) P. Beauv.

GENUS *Setaria* FAMILY Poaceae

COMMON NAMES Foxtail millet, Indian millet

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Cereal

It can be cooked and eaten like rice. The seeds can be parched, popped, added to soups and sauces or made into porridge, cakes, puddings, and dumplings.

The sprouted seeds can be used as a vegetable.

The seeds can be used for making beer.

The seeds can also be made into syrup.

CAUTION: If the seeds are left outside overwinter they can become toxic.

DESCRIPTION

An annual millet grass. It grows 1-1.5 m tall. It can be tinged with purple colour. The stalks are upright and the section between the nodes is hollow. It develops tillers from the base. It has along leaf sheath. The leaf blade is 30-45 cm long by 1.2-2.5 cm wide. It has a prominent midrib and tapers towards the tip. The flower is a spike-like branching flower 7.5-25 cm long by 1.2-5 cm wide. The side branches carry 6-12 small spikes each with 1-3 bristles. The mature grain is 2 mm long. There are many named cultivated varieties.

HABITAT

A warm temperate plant. It suits regions of low rainfall. It is grown from sea level to 2,000 m altitude. In Nepal it grows to about 1800 m altitude. In Argentina it grows from sea level to 1,000 m above sea level. It can tolerate a wide range of soil conditions. It cannot tolerate waterlogging. It cannot withstand long periods of drought. It can grow in arid places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown by seed. Seed can be broadcast or drilled. Pure stands require 8-10 kg/ha of seed. Plants are harvested by cutting off the ears.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It grows quickly. Plants mature in 80-120 days. Flowering occurs over 10-15 days. Plants can be self or cross pollinated. Yields of 800-900 kg/ha are common and straw yields for livestock feed can be up to 2,500 kg/ha.

NOTES

There are about 130 *Setaria* species. They are mainly in the tropics and subtropics.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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