PLANT FACT SHEET

Ipomoea cairica (L.) Sweet

GENUS *Ipomoea* **FAMILY** Convolvulaceae

COMMON NAMES Mile-a-minute, Coast Morning Glory

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Roots, Tubers, Vegetable

The tubers can be used as food. They must be cooked. They are bitter. Starch is extracted from them.
CAUTION: They may be slightly cancer causing
The leaves are collected and wilted in the sun then cooked either alone or with other vegetables.

DESCRIPTION

An annual climbing herb. It climbs to 5 m high. The stems are slender and branching. It keeps growing from year to year from a large tuberous rootstock. The stems can be twining or growing along the ground. These can be 1.8 m long. The leaves are green with lobes divided like fingers on a hand. The leaves are 5-12 cm across and there are 5-7 lobes. These are separate and only slightly united at the base. The leaflets are 3-6 cm long by 1-3 cm wide. They are on a stalk 2-6 cm long. Often the lowest lobe has a side lobe. The leafy structures (stipules) at the base of the leaf are also divided like fingers on a hand. The flowers are funnel shaped and purple to red and white. They have a purple centre. They are 5-6 cm long. Flowers can either be single or up to 5 on a stalk. The fruit is a round capsule. It is 1.2 cm wide. It is papery brown. There are several small black hairy seeds.

HABITAT

It grows in tropical and warm temperate places. It will grow on most well drained soils. It can grow on the edges of mangroves. It has moderate salt tolerance. It grows in woodland between 230-1,600 m above sea level in Africa. It suits hardiness zones 9-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. It can be grown using cuttings.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Leaves are collected during the rainy season. Dried leaves can be stored for several months.

NOTES

There are about 500 Ipomoea species. It can become a weed in warm temperate places.

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