PLANT FACT SHEET

Tragopogon porrifolius L.

GENUS *Tragopogon* **FAMILY** Asteraceae

COMMON NAMES Salsify, Jerusalem star, Oyster plant, Vegetable oyster

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Roots, Leaves, Shoots, Vegetable

The white roots are eaten boiled, baked or in soup.
The young leaves are edible. They can be eaten raw or used to flavour other foods.
(Cut pieces quickly discolour before cooking unless stored in water with a little lemon juice added.)
The roasted roots have been used as coffee substitute the same as chicory.
The hardened juice from broken stems can be chewed. The latex can be used as milk.

DESCRIPTION

A herb which keeps growing from year to year. It can be up to 1.5 m high and spreads to 1 m wide. It has a white thickened root. It can grow for one or two years. It has a clump of long leaves a little like an onion. They are bluish-green and grass-like. They clasp the stem and are keeled along the back surface. It produces long stalked purplish flower heads. The flowers are 3-6 cm across. The cut leaves produce milky sap.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It grows in the highlands in the tropics. It does best in light well-drained soils. It needs an open sunny position. It is resistant to drought and frost. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 5-9. Tasmania Herbarium. In Sichuan and Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. They are normally sown direct and thinned out if needed. Plants if left for a second year flower and seed easily and become self sown. In temperate places it grows over 2 years. In the first year it produces thickened roots then in the second year it flowers and seeds.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Young leaves can be made tender by covering them with mulch in the second year to blanch them. Plants are ready to harvest 5 months after planting. Roots should be harvested before flowering starts. The tender shoots 12-15 cm long are used as salsify.

NOTES

There are about 50 Tragopogon species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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French, B.R. & Maynard, A.R. Food Plants International Database. Food Plants International

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