PLANT FACT SHEET

Vigna umbellata (Thunb.) Ohwi & H. Ohashi

GENUS *Vigna* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Rice bean, Climbing-mountain-bean

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Leaves, Pods, Sprouted Seeds, Vegetable

The young pods and ripe seeds are eaten cooked. The dried seeds are boiled and served with rice or used in soups and stews.
The young leaves can be eaten.
The seeds are used in bean sprouts.
(Seeds should be cooked or crushed if fed to pigs.)

DESCRIPTION

A herb. It is a climbing bean plant with a slender hairy vine. It is twining and an annual plant. It grows from seed each year. It grows to 1.5-3 m long. Stems are hairy. Leaves have 3 leaflets which can vary in shape. They are mostly oval and 3-13 cm long by 1.5-7 cm wide. They taper towards the tip and are rounded at the base. Usually they are hairy. The leaf stalks are 3-16 cm long. Flowers are about 1.5 cm long in dense cone shaped clusters. These flowering stalks can be 3-10 cm long. The flowers are yellow. The fruit are straight pods about 10 cm long and 5 mm wide. Seeds are small (5-8 mm long) and yellow to brown. The pods split open easily. The seeds can be yellow, green, brown, red, black or mottled.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows from 0-1800 m altitude in the tropics. It suits wet climates. It occasionally becomes self sown in coastal grasslands. It needs a sunny protected position. They are drought and frost tender. It can grow in arid places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is grown by seeds. Seed collection is easy. Seeds often have a hard skin which must be broken (eg by scraping) before seeds will germinate easily.

NOTES

There are about 150 Vigna species. They are mostly in the tropics.

PICTURES

Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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