PLANT FACT SHEET

Dioscorea pentaphylla L.

GENUS *Dioscorea* **FAMILY** Dioscoreaceae

COMMON NAMES Five leaflet yam

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Tubers, Root, Leaves, Flowers

The tubers are eaten boiled or roasted. The bulbils are also cooked and eaten.
CAUTION Poisonous types of this yam also occur. These need to be cut into pieces then repeatedly boiled and put into running water or washed and baked.
The young leaves and male flowers are reported to be eaten in India.

DESCRIPTION

A yam with a climbing vine 2-5 m long. The stems have scattered small spines. There are small tubers found in the axils of the leaves as well as larger underground tubers. The leaves have 5 to 7 leaflets pointed at the tip and 8 to 15 cm long. Often the lower leaves have 5-7 leaflets and upper leaves have 3 leaflets. The leaflets are spread out like fingers on a hand. The leaves are finely hairy. The flowers are small, yellowish white with a slight smell and borne in large numbers of flower clusters in the axils of leaves. The male flower spikes are 10-18 cm long and mostly occur as two together in the axil of a leaf. The female spikes occur as 1-3 together and are as long as the male ones. The fruit are winged capsules 8-12 mm long by 6-9 mm wide. The tubers vary in colour and shape. Often they are round and covered with long hairs.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. They grow from sea level up to 1600 m. It needs a well drained, well aerated soil. They are best adapted to an abundant rainfall during the growing season and an annual dry season. Soils need to be fertile. Five leaflet yam or Dioscorea pentaphylla L. occurs mainly in China; Malaysia; India; Indonesia; the Philippines; Papua New Guinea and into the Pacific Islands. It is common and widely distributed throughout the Philippines. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

They are grown from tubers or pieces of tubers. They can be grown from aerial tubers. The dormancy of the tuber can be short. They need stakes for support. Stakes of about 2 m are adequate although live stakes are often used. They often grow wild.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Tubers are harvested after the vines die back.

NOTES

There are about 650 species of Dioscorea.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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