PLANT FACT SHEET

Arctium lappa L.

GENUS *Arctium* **FAMILY** Asteraceae

COMMON NAMES Burdock, Beggar's buttons, Edible burdock

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Roots, Leaves, Flower stalk, Vegetable

The young roots are stir fried or added to soups and stews after the bitter element is removed. This is done by peeling then soaking in water for an hour.
The roots can also be pickled, made into a paste of made into a drink.
Young leaves can be eaten cooked as a vegetable.
The pith of the flower stalk can be eaten in salads. The flowers are used for jam.
Seeds can be sprouted and eaten.

DESCRIPTION

A tall growing herb or shrub which takes two years from planting to flower and seed production. Plants can be 2 m tall. The plant forms a clump of very large, grey-green wavy-edged leaves. The leaves can be 50 cm long. The leaves and stems are covered with fine hairs. The leaves are paler underneath. In the second year a tall branched flower stalk 2 m tall grows from the centre of the clump. There are many flowers which are small and purple or white. They have a bract around them that is longer than the flower. The fruit is a spiky seed pod. This burr attaches itself to clothes. The burdock roots are long and slender and resemble parsnips. They can be a metre long and 3 cm wide. The skin is brown and the flesh is white.

HABITAT

It can grow in temperate regions but also in warm and humid places. In frosty places leaves will die back but plants will re-shoot from the roots. They need full sun and good drainage. They do best in soils with a pH of 6.5-7.5. It does not grow well in acid soils. Too much nitrogen fertiliser causes forking of the roots. They grow in Nepal at 2000 to 3600 m altitude in moist open places. It grows in wetlands. It grows in Sichuan. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Improved varieties have been selected for cultivation. The seed are sown directly at a depth of 1.5 cm. The soil temperate needs to be above 10°C. Seeds germinate best with temperatures of 20°-25°C. Seed should be soaked for 12 hours before sowing or scratched with fine sandpaper. Seed may take 2 weeks to germinate. A spacing of 20 cm is suitable.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Roots can be harvested after about 5-8 months. Roots should be 25 mm across and 60 cm long. Roots left too long become woody and tough. The flavour of roots is not as good once plants have flowered.

NOTES

There are 10 Arctium species. This one has been declared a noxious weed in Tasmania. It has anti-allergy properties.
Volatile oil, lignans, lactones, caffeic acid derivatives, including chlorogenic acid, isochlorogenic acid, polysaccharides (fructose), mucilages (xyloglucans, xylanic acids), riterpenes: phytosterols and tannins.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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