PLANT FACT SHEET

Lathyrus oleraceus Lam.

GENUS *Lathyrus* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Pea

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

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

Mostly the young seeds are eaten. They can be eaten raw or cooked.
Sometimes the young pods and leaves are eaten. The flowers are eaten in salads. The sprouted seeds are eaten.
The young leaves and buds are cooked as a vegetable.
The dry seeds are eaten. They are used in soups and stews and ground into flour.
Roasted seeds are used as a substitute for coffee.

DESCRIPTION

A short lived herb plant. A creeping plant with white or pink flowers. Plants can be 30 cm to 150 cm tall. It has a well developed tap root and many slender side roots. The stem is weak and round. Leaves are made up of 1-3 pairs of leaflets and a branched tendril at the end. There are large leaf like stipules at the base of the leaf. The lower half of these stipules has teeth. The flowers occur in the axils of leaves and are either on their own or in 2-3 flowered clusters with equal length stalks. The flowers are pink or purple in varieties grown for dry seeds and usually white in kinds grown for fresh pods. The pods are swollen and green and can have up to 10 seeds inside. Seed shape can vary. Large numbers of varieties have been recorded.
Still arguments over whether this should still be Pisum sativum.

HABITAT

A temperate plant. Plants grow best at altitudes over 1000 m in the tropics. They suit a humid climate. Hot dry weather interferes with seed setting. They are frost tolerant except at flowering. A temperate plant. They need temperatures of 13°C to 18°C. They need a pH of 5.5-6.5 and reasonably good fertility. They cannot tolerate waterlogging or very acid soils. They grow to 4,400 m altitude in the Himalayas. It suits hardiness zones 7-9.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Seed can be collected for re-sowing. A spacing about 5 cm apart in rows 25 cm apart is suitable. Seed can be 3-5 cm deep. If rotting is a problem, plants can be supported off the ground. Plants need inoculation with bacteria for good production. For dried peas plants are cut when mature then dried and threshed.

NOTES

There are 2 Pisum species. The names have now changed.

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