



PLANT FACT SHEET

Corchorus olitorius L.

GENUS *Corchorus* FAMILY Malvaceae

COMMON NAMES Jute, Bush Okra

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Seeds, Vegetable, Fruit, Leaves - tea

The young leaves and stem tops are eaten cooked. (They are slimy unless fried.)

They are also used to make a thick soup.

Leaves can be sun dried, pounded to flour, then stored for a significant time.

The leaves are used for tea drinks.

DESCRIPTION

An annual herb. It is upright, branching, and slightly woody. Plants vary in height, shape, leafiness and hairiness. Plants grown for leaves are usually only 30 cm tall. They also have many branches. Leaves are shiny and have leaf stalks. The leaves have teeth along the edge. The tips of the lowest leaves in each side, have long bristle like structures. Small clusters of yellow flowers grow in the axils of the leaves. The fruit are ridged capsules. They can be 7 cm long. These have partitions across them between the seeds. A ripe capsules contains 180-230 seeds. The seeds are dull grey and with four faces and one long point. Each seed has one pale line along it.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is mostly coastal, below 250 m altitude. Temperatures of 22°-35°C are suitable. It can stand both drought (2-3 weeks) and water-logging, except when young. A well drained soil is best. They require humus-rich soils. A pH of 5.5-7.0 is best, but they can grow in soils with pH up to 8.5. They also need adequate moisture for good leaf production. A rainfall of 1,000 mm is suitable. A high relative humidity (80-90%) is best. It produces seeds when day lengths are short. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants grow from seed, and they can be transplanted. Seeds are often broadcast into fine seed beds at the beginning of the wet season. Mixing the small seeds with sand makes it easier to sow them evenly. Often seeds are slow to start growing. This can be overcome by soaking them in hot water. A spacing of 20-30 cm between plants is suitable. For vigorous varieties this could be increased to 45-50 cm. Seeds are saved from pods for re-sowing.

Harvesting and Seed Production

First leaves can be harvested after 5-6 weeks. Tips about 20-30 cm long are picked. Production of edible green tips, is not large. 7-8 kg of leaf tips can be harvested from 3-8 pickings over 3-4 months. Seeds can be collected after 13-15 weeks. If seeds of a particular variety are desired, it is necessary to grow these plants 16 m away from other plants, to avoid cross pollination. Seeds can be stored for 8-12 months in well sealed jars.

NOTES

There are about 100 *Corchorus* species.
They are also put in the family Tiliaceae.

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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