



PLANT FACT SHEET

Benincasa hispida (Thunberg) Cogniaux

GENUS *Benincasa* FAMILY Cucurbitaceae

COMMON NAMES Wax gourd

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

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

The white flesh is added to stir fried dishes.

The seeds are fried and eaten.

Young leaves and flower buds can be cooked and eaten.

The young fruit are used as a vegetable. The mature fruit are peeled, cut in pieces and candied.

DESCRIPTION

A climbing, pumpkin family plant. The vine can be 3 m long. The plant re-grows from seed each year. The vines are thick, furrowed and hairy. The leaves are heart shaped with 5 to 7 lobes. They are rough to touch. Flowers are yellow. The immature fruit can have skin of various colours depending on variety. The fruit is up to 30 cm long and 20 cm across and green with a waxy covering when mature. This waxy layer enables the fruit to be stored for a long time. Fruit shape and size can vary with variety. The flesh is firm and white. The fruit are heavy - up to 8-45 kg.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is suited to warm, lowland, tropical conditions. It does better in dry areas or drier seasons. They are reasonably drought tolerant. The best temperature for growing is 23-28°C. They need a well-drained soil. They do best with a pH of 6.5. It grows in Nepal up to 1400 m altitude. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is grown from seeds. There are about 1800 seeds in a kg. Seed are sown 3-5 cm deep with a spacing of 60-80 cm between plants. If plants are going to be allowed to trail over the ground a spacing of about 3 m is necessary. Seed can be sown in nurseries and transplanted when 15-20 cm tall. They are usually planted in mounds and allowed to grow over a strong trellis. They can be allowed to stay on the ground. Decayed manure or compost is used where available. Plants are responsive to sulphate of ammonia. Flowering normally starts 60-80 days after planting. Flowers are open in the early morning. Hand pollination may assist fruit development. This becomes more important in colder areas. Thinning of fruit gives larger fruit. The growing tips of plants can be pruned out to encourage branching or to restrict growth.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Fruit are ready 3-5 months after planting. The fruit keeps well when fully mature. They can be stored for 6 months at 13-15°C in a dry atmosphere. The pulp of wax gourds can be shredded and dried for later use.

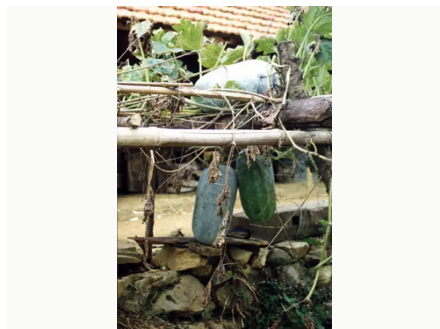
NOTES

There is only one *Benincasa* species. Because the rootstocks are resistant to several pests they are sometimes used as rootstocks for grafting on other pumpkin family plants.

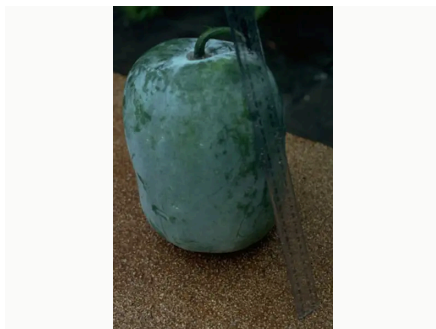
PICTURES



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