PLANT FACT SHEET

Solanum muricatum Aiton

GENUS *Solanum* **FAMILY** Solanaceae

COMMON NAMES Pepino dulce, Melon-pear, Pepino, Peruvian pepino

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Vegetable

Fruit can be eaten fresh or used in drinks. The taste is similar to a cantaloupe. They can be made into sauces, jams and preserves.
Young fruit are cooked as a vegetable.

DESCRIPTION

A small herb or small shrub. It grows to about 1 m high and spreads 1-2 m. It has a woody base a fibrous roots. The leaves are bright green with small hairs. The leaves can vary in shape. The flowers are blue or purple. Fruit shape can vary from small and oblong to heart shaped. The number of seeds also varies. The fruit can be green or with purple stripes. Fruit are often 5-12 cm long and oval.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It suits the tropical highlands. It grows in the temperate Andes region. It grows up to 3200 m altitude in these regions and down to 500 m. It does best in a warm frost free environment. It will survive temperatures of -2°C for short periods. It does not suit hot dry areas. The plants will not set fruit until night temperatures are above 18°C. It does best in a free draining soil. A neutral pH 6.5-7.5 is best. Hobart Botanical Gardens. It suits hardiness zones 9-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed. Often cuttings are used. Stem cuttings 9-14 cm long with 4- leaves are suitable. Rooting hormone, bottom heat and mist help propagation. A spacing of 1 m is appropriate.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants normally fruit in 9-12 months. Although fruit can form without pollination, a heavier crop occurs with self or cross pollination. The fruit matures in 30 - 80 days after pollination. Fruit should be picked when ripe to get the best flavour and sweetness. Fruit bruise easily so need careful handling. Fruit can be 500 g to 1 kg each.

NOTES

There are about 1400 Solanum species. It has a good iodine content.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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