PLANT FACT SHEET

Euphorbia balsamifera Aiton

GENUS *Euphorbia* **FAMILY** Euphorbiaceae

COMMON NAMES Balsam spurge

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Shoots, Stems, Gum, Vegetable

Caution: All Euphorbias or spurges have irritating sap and many have chemicals that can cause cancer.
The shoots and leaves are eaten cooked. They are also used in soup.
The juice is thickened to a jelly and eaten.

DESCRIPTION

A half succulent shrub. It grows 2-4 m high and spreads 90 cm wide. The stems are spineless and it has many branches. The stems become gnarled and grey. The leaves are pale green and occur in rings. They are near the tips of the branches. The leaves are 3-5 cm long by 6 mm wide. They are light green or bluish green. They do not have stalks and often fall off. The flowers occur singly. They are greenish-yellow. The fruit are round 3 part capsules. They are 10-12 mm across.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It needs bright light but not intense heat. It grows in the Sahel. It often grows on cliff tops and dry slopes near the sea. It can grow in sandy sites. It grows in areas with an annual rainfall between 100-600 mm. It cannot tolerate frost. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 9-11.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It can be grown from cuttings. It can be used for hedges.

NOTES

There are about 2000 Euphorbia species. Most Euphorbias have sap which irritates the skin.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

REFERENCES

Anderson, M., 2002, The World Encyclopedia of Cacti and Succulents. Hermes House, New York. p 155

Bodkin, F., 1991, Encyclopedia Botanica. Cornstalk publishing, p 462

Bonou, A., et al, 2013, Valeur economique des Produits Forestiers Non Ligneux (PFNL) au Benin. Editions Universitaires Europeennes p 92

Brickell, C. (Ed.), 1999, The Royal Horticultural Society A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants. Convent Garden Books. p 427

Burkill, H. M., 1985, The useful plants of west tropical Africa, Vol. 2. Kew.

Cundall, P., (ed.), 2004, Gardening Australia: flora: the gardener's bible. ABC Books. p 583

Diouf, M., et al, Leafy Vegetables in Senegal. Bioversity webite

Etherington, K., & Imwold, D., (Eds), 2001, Botanica's Trees & Shrubs. The illustrated A-Z of over 8500 trees and shrubs. Random House, Australia. p 315

Food Composition Tables for use in Africa FAO http://www.fao.org/infoods/directory No. 514

Grivetti, L. E., 1980, Agricultural development: present and potential role of edible wild plants. Part 2: Sub-Saharan Africa, Report to the Department of State Agency for International Development. p 26

Grubben, G. J. H. and Denton, O. A. (eds), 2004, Plant Resources of Tropical Africa 2. Vegetables. PROTA, Wageningen, Netherlands. p 561

Gueye, 2007, Traditional Leafy Vegetables in Senegal: Diversity and medicinal Uses. Afr. J. Trad. CAM (2007) 4 (4): 469 – 475

Hahn, K., et al, 2018, The use of wild plants for food: a national scale analysis for Burkina Faso (West Africa). FVSS FoodPlants Supplement

Hedrick, U.P., 1919, (Ed.), Sturtevant's edible plants of the world. p 303

Hort. kew. 2:137. 1789

Jardin, C., 1970, List of Foods Used In Africa, FAO Nutrition Information Document Series No 2.p 77

Le Houerou, H. N., (Ed.), 1980, Browse in Africa. The current state of knowledge. International Livestock Centre for Africa, Ethiopia. p 162

Martin, F.W. & Ruberte, R.M., 1979, Edible Leaves of the Tropics. Antillian College Press, Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. p 192

Maydell, H. von, 1990, Trees and shrubs of the Sahel: their characteristics and uses. Margraf. p 267

MORTIMORE,

Nassif, F., & Tanji, A., 2013, Gathered food plants in Morocco: The long forgotten species in Ethnobotanical Research. Life Science Leaflets 3:17-54

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (1999). Survey of Economic Plants for Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (SEPASAL) database. Published on the Internet; http://www.rbgkew.org.uk/ceb/sepasal/internet [Accessed 16th April 2011]

World Checklist of Useful Plant Species 2020. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Yaradua, S. S. & El-Ghani, M. A., 2015, Ethnobotanical Survey of Edible Plants Sold in Katsina Metropolis Markets.International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR). 4(12)

PROVIDED BY **Food Plants International**

French, B.R. & Maynard, A.R. Food Plants International Database. Food Plants International

LICENCE CC BY-NC-SA 3.0

ONLINE FACT SHEET https://www.echocommunity.org/en/resources/4f212478-1412-4e01-9ad4-e5a5e500697b