PLANT FACT SHEET

Amaranthus tortuosus Hornem.

GENUS *Amaranthus* **FAMILY** Amaranthaceae

COMMON NAMES Spleen amaranth

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Seeds, Vegetable

The leaves and seeds are eaten cooked. They are often mixed with bitter leaf (Vernonia) or African eggplant. CAUTION: This plant can accumulate nitrates if grown with high nitrogen inorganic fertilisers and these nitrates are poisonous.

DESCRIPTION

An annual herb plant. It is erect and grows up to 1.2 m tall. The stems are angular and the plant is often branched from the base upwards. Plants can be green or tinged purple. The leaves are 3-8 cm long by 2-5 cm wide. The leaf stalk is 1-5 cm long. Leaves can taper to a point at the tip and taper quickly towards the base. The flower clusters are in spikes on side branches and these can be branched. The flower stalks at the tip can be lax. The flower clusters can be 10-20 cm long and either stick upwards or bend over. Most of the flowers are female. Seed are 1-1.2 mm across and rather flat. Several types occur.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It suits the tropical humid lowlands. It can grow in arid places. In Papua New Guinea it grows between sea level and 1,800 m altitude. It needs a night temperature above 15°C and preferably a day temperature above 25°C. It needs fertile, well-drained soil.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed if the soil is warm. Seeds are small and grow easily. They can be broadcast in a nursery and then transplanted. Cuttings of growing plants root easily.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Leaves are available throughout the year in humid places.

NOTES

There are about 60 Amaranthus species.

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