PLANT FACT SHEET

Physalis philadelphica Lam.

GENUS *Physalis* **FAMILY** Solanaceae

COMMON NAMES Tomatillo, Ground cherry

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit

The fruit are used in sauces. The fruit is also used fresh or cooked. They can be stewed or fried.

DESCRIPTION

This herb is an annual plant in temperate regions and a perennial plant in the tropics. It is a soft wooded creeping plant. It can be 1 m high. The branches are purple, spreading and covered with fine hairs. The leaves are heart shaped and nearly opposite. They are 6-15 cm long. They are slightly velvety. The flowers are bell shaped and hang down. They occur in the axils of leaves. They are yellow with purple spots. The fruit buds occur after 12-13 stem internodes have formed. The fruit is covered with a straw coloured husk. The fruit is a berry with smooth waxy skin. It is orange-yellow. The juicy pulp contains small yellow seeds.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. In the Andes it occurs at 800-3,200 m altitude. The plants are frost tender. They need a sunny frost free position. They need to be protected from strong winds. They need well drained soil. They can grow on poor sandy soil. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 7-11.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. There are about 250 seeds per gram. Small seeds like this are often best sown mixed with some fine soil to achieve even planting. Plants can be grown from one year old stem cuttings. Such plants flower earlier but are less vigorous than seedlings. Plants are self pollinating. Pollination can be improved by lightly shaking plants or giving them a spraying with water. Plants need constant watering to get a good crop. Little fertiliser is needed. Fertiliser can promote vegetative growth at the expense of fruiting.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Fruit are harvested when they fall to the ground.

NOTES

There are about 75-100 Physalis species.

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