PLANT FACT SHEET

Melochia corchorifolia L.

GENUS *Melochia* **FAMILY** Malvaceae

COMMON NAMES Chocolate weed, Red-weed

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Vegetable

The tender leaves are eaten cooked as a vegetable. They are also used in soups. The cooked leaves are slimy and a popular side dish.

DESCRIPTION

A herb or small shrub that can re-grow each year or continue growing for a few years. It grows 0.2-1.5 m high and spreads 0.5-1.5 m wide. It has a somewhat woody rootstock. The lower stem is hollow. The young growth can be slightly hairy. The branches can be spreading or erect. The leaves are 2-6 cm long by 1-3 cm wide. They are sword shaped or oval. Sometimes the leaves have 3 lobes. The edge of the leaf has small teeth. The tip of the leaf is pointed. The flowers are 1 cm across. They occur in short clusters and are purple. They are near the ends of branches. The petals are about 0.5 cm long. The fruit is a capsule about 0.5 cm across. It is round and usually slightly hairy.

HABITAT

A tropical and subtropical plant. It usually grows naturally in swampy or moist soils. They benefit from organic matter in the soil. Plants can grow in light shade. They are damaged by frosts. In Nepal it grows up to 1300 m altitude.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed or cuttings. The seeds can have a hard seed coat that needs treatment to help germination. Seeds germinate best at 35-40°C.

Harvesting and Seed Production

In Australia, plants flower in March to September.

NOTES

There are about 55 Melochia species. They grow in the tropics.
Also put in the family Sterculiaceae.

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