PLANT FACT SHEET

Hemidesmus indicus (L.) W. T. Aiton

GENUS *Hemidesmus* **FAMILY** Apocynaceae

COMMON NAMES Indian sarsaparilla

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Roots - flavouring, Tuber, Leaves

The roots are the source of a syrup used as a flavouring in foods in place of sarsaparilla. They are used in tea and soft drinks.
The root bark is powdered and used as a coffee drink.
The young leaves are used to prepare a drink. They are also cooked and eaten as a vegetable.

DESCRIPTION

A shrubby twining plant or climber. It has a woody rootstock and long whip-like stems. These are thickened at the nodes. The leaves are simple, long and narrow. They are 5-10 cm long by 0.8-1.8 cm wide. The flower stalks are covered by many bracts. The fruit is a long dry pod. It is 10-15 cm long by 0.6 cm wide. The seeds are 6-8 mm long.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. In Sri Lanka it grows below 800 m above sea level.

NOTES

There is only one Hemidesmus species.
It has also been put in the family Asclepiadaceae and Periplocaceae.

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