



## PLANT FACT SHEET

# *Solanum melongena* L.

GENUS *Solanum* FAMILY Solanaceae

COMMON NAMES Eggplant, Aubergine, Brinjal

## EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

**Edible parts:** Fruit, Leaves, Vegetable

Fruit are mostly fried then eaten. They can also be grilled, baked, stuffed and stewed. They are used in curries. The fruit are also dried and stored.

The leaves although edible are hairy and not good flavour. They are mixed with rice bran and salt in which Japanese radishes are pickled.

## DESCRIPTION

A perennial shrubby herb up to 1 m tall. It is often grown as an annual. It has a deep taproot and branched side roots. The stem is thick and covered with many woolly hairs. The plant has many branches. Often the plant is spiny. The leaves are large, alternate and simple. They are angular and unequal near the stalk. Leaves can be 20 cm long and wavy along the edge. Leaves are covered with hairs. Flowers are bluish red and 5 cm across. They are either solitary or in small groups opposite the leaves. They have 5 large woolly lobes which continue to surround the base of the fruit. Fruit are white, blue, green or purple. The fruit colour and shape vary. Sometimes the fruit is spiny. Often the fruit are 10 to 20 cm long and 5-8 cm wide. Numerous kidney shaped seeds are in the flesh of the berry. There are many cultivated varieties.

## HABITAT

A tropical plant. A plant of the warm tropics. Plants grow from sea level up to 2200 m altitude in the tropics. It suits wet climates but does well in dry climates with irrigation. It needs a long warm growing period. A daily mean temperature of 20-30°C is most suitable. They are frost tender. They need a rich, friable, well tilled soil. In the subtropics they can be grown as a summer crop. In Nepal plants grow to 1500 m altitude. It suits hardiness zones 9-12.

## PRODUCTION

### Cultivation

Plants are grown from seeds. Seeds germinate slowly. At the best temperature they germinate in 8-12 days. Seed are sown in nursery beds. Seedlings can be transplanted when about 8 cm tall or 4-6 weeks old. Plants need to be about 60-100 cm apart. Because some cross pollination can occur seed crops need to have varieties planted 400 m apart.

## Harvesting and Seed Production

Fruit are ready for harvest after 3 months. They continue to yield for 3-4 months.

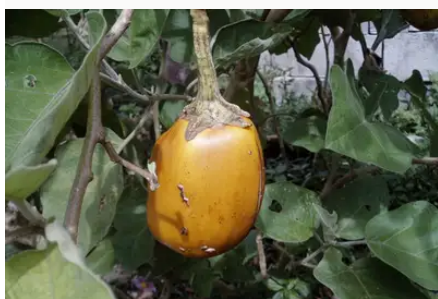
## NOTES

There are about 1400 *Solanum* species.  
It possibly has anti-cancer properties.

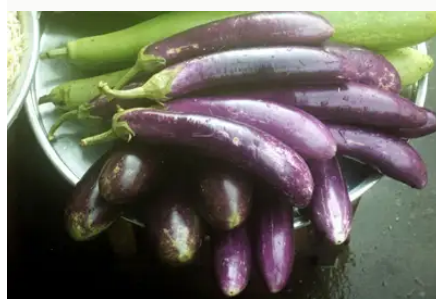
## PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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