PLANT FACT SHEET

Smilax herbacea L.

GENUS *Smilax* **FAMILY** Smilacaceae

COMMON NAMES Carrion flower, Jacob's ladder

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Leaves, Root

The tuberous roots are dug and cleaned then cut in short pieces and pounded until the fibres are separated. This sediment is used to make a jelly or diluted and sweetened to drink.
The shoots and tips are cooked and eaten. They can be served like asparagus.
The ripe fruit can be eaten raw. They are also pureed and made into jellies and sauces. The fruit sauce is good for basting wild meats.

DESCRIPTION

An annual vine. It is smooth and without thorns. The stems are green and not woody. It grows 2.5 m long. The branches have long green tendrils with prickles. The leaves are oval and heart shaped. They are widest at the base. The male and female flowers are on separate vines. They are greenish white. The fruit are round and like berries. They are 8-15 mm across. The fruit occur in clusters. They are dark blue to black. There are several seeds.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It grows on the edges of woodlands. It is often on calcareous soils. It suits hardiness zone 4.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It can be grown by seeds or cuttings.

NOTES

There are about 300 Smilax species.

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