PLANT FACT SHEET

Smilax aspera L.

GENUS *Smilax* **FAMILY** Smilacaceae

COMMON NAMES Wild sarsaparilla, Italian smilax

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Root, Stems, Fruit

The tender leaves and shoots are cooked as a vegetable. They are also added to salads. They are also pickled.
The roots yield a kind of sarsaparilla.
The young stems are boiled or fried. They are also made into omelettes.

DESCRIPTION

A twining shrub or climbing vine. It grows 3 m high and spreads 60 cm wide. The stems have branches and are ridged and angled. They usually have a few prickles. The leaves have stalks. The stalks are often curved and twisted. The leaves are alternate. The leaves are 5-9 cm long by 4-7 cm wide or larger. They are oval or sword shaped and have a sharp tip. The stalk bears a pair of long slender tendrils near the base. The flowers have stalks. They are white and have a scent. There are 5-25 umbels each with 3-6 flowers in a spike.

HABITAT

It grows in temperate and tropical locations. In Nepal it grows between 1200-2900 m altitude. It grows on forest trees in moist places. It suits hardiness zones 8-10. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed.

NOTES

There are about 300 Smilax species.

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