PLANT FACT SHEET

Dioscorea cayennensis Lam.

GENUS *Dioscorea* **FAMILY** Dioscoreaceae

COMMON NAMES Yellow Guinea yam

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Tubers, Root, Vegetable

The tuber is cooked and eaten. It is roasted, boiled or fried.
A tea is made from the leaves.

DESCRIPTION

A yam with a spiny vine. There are more spines near the base. The stem can be 10-12 m long. Plants twine to the right-hand. The leaves are pale green and heart shaped near the base. They are 8-10 cm long by 3-6 cm wide. They are rather leathery. The leaves are shiny on the top surface. There are 7 veins or nerves running out from the base of the leaf. They can be produced opposite each other or one after another along the stem. The flowers occur either singly or in pairs in the axils of leaves. The tubers are large and yellow fleshed. The head of the tuber is hard and woody. There are many different cultivated varieties.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It occurs in the forest zones. It is less tolerant of drought than the White Guinea Yam. It does not grow where there is a long dry season.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Tubers do not become dormant when they are mature. They cannot therefore be stored for long times and must be eaten or replanted. The tubers can be removed leaving the top part in the ground and another crop of tubers will be produced meaning it can be harvested throughout the year. Most commonly the head of the tuber is used for replanting. The tuber can be cut into setts and the different parts used. A spacing of 1.2 m between plants is considered suitable. Tubers are often planted in fairly wide deep holes.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Growth of the yam is almost continuous. It takes almost 12 months to reach maturity. In areas of good rainfall it gives good yields. Tubers can weigh between 2 and 10 kg. Yields of 30 t per ha are achievable.

NOTES

There are about 650 species of Dioscorea.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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