PLANT FACT SHEET

Vernonia hymenolepis A. Rich.

GENUS *Vernonia* **FAMILY** Asteraceae

COMMON NAMES Sweet bitterleaf

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Vegetable

The leaves are cooked and eaten fresh. They are also dried and used in salads and as a potherb.

DESCRIPTION

A shrub. It keeps growing from year to year. It can grow 12 m tall. The young branches have a dense covering. The leaves are simple and alternate. They are 6-34 cm long by 1-10 cm wide. They can taper to the base of be wedge shaped. There are small teeth along the edge. Leaves are hairy underneath. The flower heads are compound and at the top of the plant. The flowers have both sexes. The fruit is ribbed and dry. It is 3-6 mm long. It has bristles.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It grows along river beds and on the edges of forests. It can also be in mountain forests. They thrive at temperatures below 30°C. They grow between 1,400-3,000 m above sea level. They grow well in loose, moist, humus rich soil.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is planted as a hedge around houses. Plants can be grown from seeds. Seeds are collected from dry flower heads by rubbing and blowing away the chaff. Seeds are usually broadcast but can be sown in nursery beds. They can be transplanted after 2-3 weeks. Seedlings with bitter leaves are not used. A spacing of 30 cm is suitable. Seeds emerge 5 days after planting. Plants can be grown from cuttings. Cuttings with 4 buds taken from a mature plant are suitable. They are planted at an angle. Growth of cuttings is slow.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants grow very rapidly. They can be 40-50 cm high in 4 weeks.

NOTES

It has anti tumour or anticancer properties.

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