



PLANT FACT SHEET



Use with caution

This plant can be harmful if it is eaten raw, in large amounts or without the right preparation. Read the whole fact sheet before use.

Lathyrus sativus L.

GENUS *Lathyrus* FAMILY Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Chickling Vetch, Grass Pea

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Leaves, Pods, Vegetable

CAUTION: Poisonous unless treated. It can cause the legs to become paralysed. This disease called lathyrism occurs when the diet is 30-50% chickling vetch. The risk can be reduced by boiling and baking.

The seeds are eaten. They are used in soups. In small quantities they do not cause problems.

The leaves are eaten as a pot-herb.

The flour from the dried seeds is occasionally mixed with wheat or rye flour.

The very young pods are cooked and eaten.

DESCRIPTION

An annual herb. It is a scrambling plant. It grows 100 cm high and spreads 100 cm wide. The stems are winged. The leaves have stalks. The leaves have 3 leaflets. The leaflets have short stalks. The leaflets are 2-5.5 cm long. The tendrils branch. The flowers are blue or reddish-purple. The fruit is a flat pod.

HABITAT

It grows in warm temperate places. In Nepal it grows to about 1100 m altitude. In Africa it grows to 3,500 m above sea level. It grows in moist places. It is drought resistant. It grows in the highlands in Eritrea. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 8-10.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It gives some yield even when other bean or grain crops have failed.

NOTES

There are about 150 *Lathyrus* species.

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