PLANT FACT SHEET

# *Plectranthus rotundifolius* (Poir.) Spreng.

**GENUS** *Plectranthus* **FAMILY** Lamiaceae

**COMMON NAMES** Hausa potato, African potato, Sudan potato

## EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

**Edible parts:** Tubers, Root, Leaves, Vegetable

The tubers are boiled and eaten. They can be added to curries, baked, or fried into chips. They are boiled and eaten with coconut milk. They can be eaten raw or baked, steamed, added to soups or stews or mashed and fried.
The leaves are eaten. The leaves can be used as flavouring.
Ripe fruit are eaten.

## DESCRIPTION

A small annual herb. It grows 15-30 cm high. It can lie along the ground or curve upwards. The stem is succulent. The leaves are thick and have a smell like mint. The flowers are small and pale violet. There are small, dark brown tubers in clusters at the base of the stem. They can be 20 cm long by 2 cm wide.

## HABITAT

A tropical plant. It suits high rainfall areas with an evenly distributed rainfall and low night temperatures. It is grown as a monsoonal crop. It needs a well drained, sand loam. It cannot stand water-logging. It is grown on ridges in heavier soils. It cannot stand cold or frost. It cannot tolerate drought. The best pH is 6.5-7.0. In East Africa it grows up to 2,200 m above sea level.

## PRODUCTION

### Cultivation

It is grown from suckers from germinating tubers. The tubers are put in a nursery bed about 4 cm deep and 10 cm apart. Tubers germinate in 10-15 days once watered. These produce a cluster of sprouts which are then transplanted after about 3 months. The earth is heaped up around the plants to encourage tubers. A spacing of 20 cm apart in rows 90 cm apart is used.
It can also be grown from cuttings. Sections 10-20 cm long are used.

### Harvesting and Seed Production

Crops reach maturity in about 5-6 months. This may be longer in colder places. Yields of 8-15 tonnes per hectare are average. Tubers should be harvested as soon as they are mature to avoid decay. In South Africa they are available May to August.

## NOTES

It possibly has anti-cancer properties.

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