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.

Capsella bursa-pastoris (L.) Medik.

GENUS *Capsella* **FAMILY** Brassicaceae

COMMON NAMES Shepherd's purse, Water chestnut vegetable

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Tea, Seeds, Vegetable, Pods, Flowers, Root

The young tender leaves are cooked and used as a vegetable. They are also used in stir fried dishes and soups and stews. They can also be eaten raw in salads. They need to be gathered before the flowers appear. They are dried and used for tea drinks.
The dried seed pods give a pepper like flavouring. They are used as a spice.
The fresh or dried roots can be used as a ginger substitute.
Caution: It is not recommended during pregnancy. It can cause miscarriages.

DESCRIPTION

A cabbage family herb. It is an annual plant or it can take 2 years to complete its life cycle. The stem is erect. It grows to 60 cm high. It has a rosette of leaves near the base. The leaves vary in shape and are toothed along the edge. The upper leaves are smaller, sword shaped and without stalks. The flowers are white. They are in clusters at the ends of branches. The fruit is a flat, triangular, pod.

HABITAT

It grows in temperate and subtropical places. In Nepal it grows to 4,800 m altitude. It grows best in moist soils. It grows in higher rainfall areas. It is resistant to frost and drought. It survives the winter snow. In Zimbabwe it grows between 1,490-1,920 m above sea level. In Yunnan. In Sichuan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. The seeds can lie dormant in the soil for 30 years.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The seeds contain 15-20% oil.

NOTES

There are 5 Capsella species. It is the second most common weed on earth. It produces a temporary drop in blood pressure. Chemical composition (leaves ?): Protein = 2.9%. Fat = 0.2%. Carbohydrate = 1.0%; (seeds): Fatty oil = 35.2%. Amino acid = 74.8% - high in Arginine, Aspartic acid, and Cysteine. The plant is reported to contain significant quantities of Vitamin C, lime, and iron; and moderate amounts of Vitamins A, and B1.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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