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.

Icacina oliviformis (Poiret) Raynal

GENUS *Icacina* **FAMILY** Icacinaceae

COMMON NAMES False African, yam

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Tubers, Root, Fruit

The young seeds can be boiled and eaten as peas.
Caution: The tuber is poisonous without special preparation.
The starchy tuber is cut up and leached in running water to remove the toxic element. The pieces are then dried, pounded, and strained to remove the fibres. They are either eaten without further processing or made into a paste with boiling water.
The older seeds are put to steep in water for a week, which is changed every morning to rid it of its bitter element. They are then left to dry in the sun for two days. Finally, they are reduced to flour by pounding.
The pink pulp of the fruit is edible.

DESCRIPTION

A shrubby plant which keeps growing from year to year. Each year it produces erect leafy shoots. The aerial stems are light green and can be 90 cm high. The leaves are rounded but can be pointed. They are 5-10 cm long by 4-7 cm wide. They are light green when young. They become leathery, and dark green above and dull green underneath. The flowers are small and white or cream. The fruit is a bright red oval berry. It is about 2.5-3 cm long by 2-2.5 cm wide. It is covered with short hairs. There is a layer of white pulp around a single seed. The plant forms a tuber 45 cm long by 30 cm wide. The tubers are grey in colour with thin skin and white flesh.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in tropical Africa. It grows in light sandy soils. It grows in woody savannah. It can tolerate drought.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

About 440 plants per hectare occur.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Tubers can be 45-100 cm long and 30 cm across. They can weigh 3-25 kg. Yields can be 3-20 t per hectare.

NOTES

It can be invasive and hard to remove.

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