PLANT FACT SHEET

Nicandra physalodes (L.) Gaertn.

GENUS *Nicandra* **FAMILY** Solanaceae

COMMON NAMES Apple of Peru

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Leaves, Seeds, Vegetable, Root

The leaves are boiled and eaten with maize meal.
The seeds are used for making a cooling drink.
The ripe fruit are eaten raw.
The roots are eaten raw.

DESCRIPTION

An annual herb. It branches freely. It is a large plant supported on stout stems. It can grow 50 cm to 4 m high. It is larger in warmer places. The stems are fluted or ribbed. They are pale green. They are hollow and become woody in older plants. The leaves are thin and flat. They are oval with wavy or toothed edges. The flowers are bell-shaped and lilac-blue. They are 2.5 cm across. These form papery pods. Inside there is a berry with seeds. The berry is 1-2 cm across. The seeds are 1-2 mm long.

HABITAT

It grows in warm temperate and subtropical regions. It needs full sun and a rich, well-drained soil. In southern China it grows between 800-2,600 m above sea level. In Argentina it grows from sea level to 2,500 m above sea level. It suits hardiness zones 8-11. In Sichuan and Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Leaves are collected during the rainy season. In southern India plants flower and fruit October to February.

NOTES

There is only one Nicandra species. It is native to South America.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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