PLANT FACT SHEET

Elettaria cardamomum (L.) Maton

GENUS *Elettaria* **FAMILY** Zingiberaceae

COMMON NAMES Cardamom, Ceylon cardamom

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Herb, Spice, Seeds, Leaves

The seeds are used as a flavouring. They are used in biscuits and cakes. It is also used in curries and added to coffee.
The seeds are chewed after meals to sweeten the breath.
The young shoots are eaten raw or steamed or roasted.
Leaves are used for wrapping foods before cooking.
The seeds are used in cakes.

DESCRIPTION

A ginger family herb. It keeps growing from year to year. It grows to 3 m high and spreads to 1 m across. It has a clump of leafy aerial stems and then thick fleshy underground stems. The leaves are long and can be 1 m x 30 cm. They are dark green and alternate. The leaves are paler and softly hairy underneath. The flowers are green and white and produced on a branched flower stalk near the ground. The flowers have a violet tip. Seed capsules with several wrinkled seeds develop. The capsule has 3 cells. They are pale green and have a sweet smell.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It grows from sea level up to about 1,800 m altitude in the tropics. In PNG it is mostly between 550-1,700 m above sea level. It prefers warm, rich, moist soils. It needs a protected and partly shaded position. It is drought and frost tender. Seed need a temperature between 19 and 24°C to grow. Plants need a temperature above 10°C. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed. It is normally grown under the shade of the primary rainforest. Seeds are slow to germinate. It can be grown from slips of plants.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The capsules are harvested when they are almost ripe but before they turn yellow. They are then dried in a warmed and ventilated shed.

NOTES

There are 7 Elettaria species.

PICTURES

Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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