



PLANT FACT SHEET

Dioscoreophyllum cumminsii (Stapf) Diels

GENUS *Dioscoreophyllum* **FAMILY** Menispermaceae

COMMON NAMES Serendipity berry, Guinea potato

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Tubers, Root, Fruit

The fruit is edible and used to sweeten food. (It contains monellin which is 3,000 times sweeter than sugar). The tubers can be eaten like potato. They are used to thicken soups.

DESCRIPTION

A creeper or climber. It can be soft or woody. It has tuberous underground stems. These tubers are 2 cm across and white. The stems are hairy. The leaves are alternate. The leaf stalk is 6-15 cm long. The fruit is a red berry. The leaf blade can be entire or have lobes. It is an oval to triangle shape. It is 9-20 cm long and wide. It is spear head or heart shaped at the base. It tapers at the tip. The veins spread like fingers on a hand. The flowering stalks are in the axils and male flower group are 20 cm long while the female flowers are 10 cm long. The flowers are yellow-green and do not have petals. The fruit is fleshy with a stone inside. It is 3.5 cm long. The stalk is 1 cm long. It is yellow-red. The seeds are 1.5-3 cm long.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in densely closed forest vegetation. In West Africa it grows between 200-400 m above sea level. In Zimbabwe a variety grows between 1,000-1,200 m above sea level.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed or tubers. Seeds need to germinate in the dark. They take about 68 days to germinate. Plants can be grown from stem cuttings.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The fruit can be stored. It will keep for several weeks at room temperature.

NOTES

There are 2 *Dioscoreophyllum* species. It is a good sweetener for diabetics and has low calories.

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