PLANT FACT SHEET

Grewia asiatica L.

GENUS *Grewia* **FAMILY** Malvaceae

COMMON NAMES Phalsa

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit

The ripe fruit are eaten raw. They are tart. The fruit are eaten as a dessert. They are also used for pickles.
They are also used to make a drink.
They are fermented into alcoholic drinks. Caution: Alcohol is a cause of cancer.
The gum from the bark is used to clarify sugarcane juice.

DESCRIPTION

A shrub or small tree. It loses its leaves during the year. It grows 4-8 m tall. The bark is rough and grey. The branches are long, slender and drooping. Young branches are covered with hairs. The leaves are alternate. They are simple. The leaves are a broad oval or heart shape. They can be 20 cm long by 16 cm wide. The base is at an angle. They taper to the tip. The edges have coarse teeth. There are some hairs on the top of the leaf and a covering under the leaf. The leaf stalk is 1.5 cm long. The flowering stalks are in the axils of leaves. There are 3-5 stalks with 2-8 flowers clustered in groups. The flowers are yellow. The fruit are small and round and dark blue to almost black when ripe. They are about 2 cm across. They have indistinct lobes. The flesh is soft, fibrous and greenish-white stained a purplish-red. There are 1-2 half round seeds. These are 5 mm across.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. Plants can grow in tropical and subtropical conditions. They can stand temperatures of 44°C as well as light frosts. It can tolerate frost when dormant. They require a deep well drained soil with a pH of 5.5-7. They occur at low altitudes in the Philippines in Cagayan, Bataan and the Ilocos regions. It grows in dry and secondary dense forest. It can grow in humid and arid regions. It flowers and fruits best where there is a distinct wet and dry season. It needs a distinct winter and summer climate regime. It can grow on a range of soils but is sensitive to waterlogging. It grows on limestone soils. It can grow in arid places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Trees are mostly grown from seed. The seeds are taken from fresh fruit. Seedlings are usually transplanted while dormant. It can be grown from cutting using rooting hormone. It can also be grown by air-layering. Budding can also be used. Seeds are sown when freshly removed from the berries. Seeds germinate in 15-20 days. They are best put in a seed bed and transplanted when about one year old. Plants should be pruned each year. They should be cut back to about 1-1.2 m above the ground. Plants in warmer climates are pruned less and grow

taller. When plants are pruned hard larger fruit develop but these are of poorer quality. Flowers develop only on the current year's growth. Plants need to be 3-5 m apart. Fruit are picked when ripe. The fruit are very perishable so need to be eaten immediately.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It takes 45-55 days from flowering to fruit maturity. An average of 5-8 kg of fruit per tree each year is normal. The first harvest of fruit are available 13-15 months after planting but it takes 3 years for good fruit production. Harvesting occurs over a period of time requiring several harvests. Ripe fruit will only keep for a few days. In Rajasthan in India fruit are available May to August. Because fruit ripen at different times, regular pickings are needed. Fruit mature 60 days after fruit set. One plant can produce 4 kg of fruit. Plants start bearing after 3 years and can produce for 20 years.

NOTES

There are about 200 Grewia species. They are mostly tropical. The fruit of most may be edible. These were in the Sparrmanniaceae and the Tiliaceae.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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