PLANT FACT SHEET

Dioscorea cayennensis subsp. rotundata (Poir.) Miege

GENUS *Dioscorea* **FAMILY** Dioscoreaceae

COMMON NAMES White Guinea Yam

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Tubers, Root, Vegetable

The tubers are cooked and eaten.

DESCRIPTION

A climbing yam plant. The stems are round and can be 10-12 m long. They twine to the right around sticks. The stems are usually spiny, but can be smooth. There is a white bloom on the stems. The leaves are opposite and simple. They are 10-12 cm long by 6-8 cm wide. They are heart shaped and taper to a point. They are normally dark green and glossy. Some forms have leafy outgrowths (stipules) at the base of the leaf stalks. The flowers are often in groups of 4 and are formed near the leaves. It is mostly male flowers which occur and seeds are rarely produced. The tubers vary in shape, size and texture. Mostly they are like cylinders with rounded or pointed ends. The skin is smooth and brown with white flesh. The tubers can also be distorted in shape. Mostly only one tuber forms and the top end of the tuber is woody. A large number of different cultivated varieties occur.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in places with a distinct dry season. Tubers have a time of dormancy. It can tolerate drought more than Greater yam (Dioscorea alata). It suits relatively heavy soils with a reasonable clay content. Rainfall of 1000-1500 mm distributed over 8-10 months is suitable.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Mostly setts of tubers are used. Occasionally seeds are used. Plants can also be grown from cuttings. About 1 sq metre per plant is suitable.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Crops last 8-10 months. Tubers can be stored for several months. Tubers normally weigh 2-5 kg but can be up to 10 kg weight. Yields of 16-20 t/ha are normal. Tubers should not be stored below 15°C as chilling injury can result.

NOTES

There are about 650 species of Dioscorea. Many prefer to keep this as a separate species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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