PLANT FACT SHEET

Melastoma malabathricum subsp. malabathricum

D. Don

GENUS *Melastoma* **FAMILY** Melastomataceae

COMMON NAMES Native Lasiandra, Blue tongue

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Roots, Flowers

The ripe fruit are eaten raw. (The flesh stains the mouth.)
The roots are eaten raw.
Honey is found in the old flowers.

DESCRIPTION

A medium sized shrub. It grows 1-3 m high and spreads 1-2 m across. It has a bushy habit. The stems are scaly and the young growth has coarse hairs. The leaves are 4-12 cm long by 1-4 cm wide. The leaves are mid-green and somewhat leathery. They are produced opposite one another. They have 3-5 prominent veins. They are hairy on both surfaces. The leaf stalk is 2 cm long. The flowering arrangements are at the ends of branches. They have up to 10 flowers. The flowers are 4-8 cm across and open. They are purple with yellow stamens. The fruit are 0.6-1.4 cm across. They are round or urn shaped and black when ripe. They occur singly or in bunches near the ends of branches. The seeds are very small and in purple pulp. The fruit are edible.

HABITAT

A tropical and subtropical plant. The plants mostly grow in moist soils. They will grow on a range of soils. It does best in full sunlight. It cannot tolerate frost. The plants occur in coastal areas in open forest. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed. They can also be grown from cuttings. Regular pruning is helpful.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants are fast growing. In Australia, plants flower all year round but more commonly from December to March.

NOTES

There are about 22 Melastoma species. The flesh of the fruit stains the mouth.

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