PLANT FACT SHEET

Lycium chinense Mill.

GENUS *Lycium* **FAMILY** Solanaceae

COMMON NAMES Chinese boxthorn, Chinese matrimony-vine

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: leaves - condiment, Spice, Tea, Fruit, Seeds - coffee, Leaves - tea, Vegetable, Seeds - oil

The berries make a sweet addition to any dish. The ripe fruit are eaten fresh. They taste like liquorice. They can be added to soups or braised dishes. They are also used for juices and fermented.
The young soft leaves are eaten in salads. The leaves are cooked with pork or added to soup. Ginger, pepper and a little sugar can help counter the bitter flavour in soups.
The roasted seeds are used for coffee.
Dried leaves are used for tea.

DESCRIPTION

A spiny deciduous shrub. It grows 4.5 m high. The branches are stiff, straight and unbranched. The branches have long thorns. These are where the leaves sprout from the stem. There are only a few leaves. The leaves are oval and vary between 2-6 cm long. They are dark green. The flowers are purplish. They are tube shaped and held in clusters of 1 to 4. The fruit are reddish-orange berries. They hang down. The fruit are 25 mm long.

HABITAT

A Mediterranean climate plant. It will grow in the highlands in warm tropical countries. In Indonesia it grows at about 2,000 m above sea level. Photo from Singapore. It suits hardiness zones 6-10. In Yunnan. In Sichuan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed or by using cuttings. They often sprout by suckers.

Harvesting and Seed Production

For leaves the tips are cut off creating a hedge. For fruit the branches are left and the fruit picked.

NOTES

The berries are high in carotene. Chemical composition (leafy shoots): Protein = 3.9%. Fat = 0.72%. Carbohydrate = 2.254%. Ash = 1.3%. It is high in proVitamin A. There are about 100 Lycium species.
It contains 17.73 mg alpha-tocopherol (Vitamin E) per 100 g in the leaves.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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