PLANT FACT SHEET

Sphenostylis stenocarpa (Hochst. ex A. Rich.) Harms

GENUS *Sphenostylis* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES African yam bean

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Leaves, Tubers, Root, Pods, Vegetable

The pods, leaves, seeds and tubers are cooked and eaten. They are used in soups or with maize or rice.
The hard seeds need to be soaked in water for 12 hours before cooking and being ground.
The tubers are cooked and eaten.

DESCRIPTION

A vigorous climbing vine. It is a herb that grows 1.5-2 m high. It has tuberous roots. The leaves have 3 leaflets. They are 14 cm long and 5 cm wide. The flowers are pink, purple or greenish-white. They are 2.5 cm long. They are on stout stalks in the axils of leaves. The seed pods are smooth. They are flat but have both edges raised. They are 25-30 cm long by 1-1.5 cm wide. The seeds vary in shape, size and colour. They can be 1 cm long by 0.7 cm wide. They can be cream or brown. There are small narrow tubers under the ground. They can be 5-7.5 cm long and weigh 50-150 g. The flesh is white and watery.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It grows from sea level up to 1800 m altitude. It grows in grassland and woodland and sometimes in marshy sites. It can grow in arid places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It can be grown from seed or tubers.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Tubers are ready for harvest about 8 months after planting. The seeds are produced after 5 months. Tubers can weigh 500 g.

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