PLANT FACT SHEET

Abelmoschus moschatus subsp. tuberosus Medik, (Span.) Borss. Waalk.

GENUS *Abelmoschus* **FAMILY** Malvaceae

COMMON NAMES Climbing hibiscus, Musk mallow

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Root, Fruit, Seed pods, Vegetable

The leaves, shoots and roots are eaten raw or cooked.
The roots are cooked in hot ashes.

DESCRIPTION

The shrub grows up to 2 m high and can spread 2 m wide. It is hairy to prickly. It continues to grow from year to year. It does this by the top dying back and re-growing from the thickened root. The stems are thin and the branches spread out. The leaves are green and shaped like the fingers on a hand. There are 3-7 lobes but the leaves vary in shape. The leaves are up to 4-10 cm long by 4-8 cm wide and hairy. The flowers are a deep pink colour or yellow with purple centres. They are like hibiscus flowers. The flowers are 5-8 cm across. They are attractive. They grow singly in the angles of leaves. They occur in summer. The fruit capsule is 5 sided containing seeds. The capsule is 2-5 cm long and about 2 cm across. The seeds have a musk smell. The seeds are small and brown. When the plant dies back a thickened long root develops under the ground. This root can be up to 1 m long in good loose soil.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It grows in light well drained soils. It suits a protected lightly shaded position. It is damaged by drought and frost. It must grow where temperatures are above 5°C. It often grows in open forest and amongst annual grasses. It is often near creeks and in depressions on river flats. Because of the thickened root it is able to survive fires and dry periods.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It can be grown by seed or cuttings. The underground tubers die off but re-grow. Plants can be transplanted easily during the time when the tops have died back.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The plant flowers from December to March in the Southern hemisphere. Fruit occur from January to April. The stem die back each year to a tuberous root. This root tastes like a carrot.

NOTES

There are about 15 Abelmoschus species. They are tropical and subtropical.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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