PLANT FACT SHEET

Use with caution

This plant can be harmful if it is eaten raw, in large amounts or without the right preparation. Read the whole fact sheet before use.

Gymnema sylvestre (Retz.) R. Br. ex Sm.

GENUS *Gymnema* **FAMILY** Apocynaceae

COMMON NAMES Australian cow-plant

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Fruit, Vegetable, Sap

The leaves when chewed paralyse the sense of taste for sweet and sour.
The leaves are used as a potherb and in soup.
Caution: The fruit contain some alkaloids.
The fruit are roasted in hot ashes.
The fruit are cooked and used in vegetable dishes. They are roasted in hot ashes for a few minutes then peeled and eaten.

DESCRIPTION

A small climber. It has a taproot and keeps growing from year to year. It grows 1-3 m tall. It can grow longer. It has a woody rootstock and slender stems. Young growth is softly hairy. The leaves are 2.5-5 cm long by 1.5-2 cm wide. They are oval or sword shaped. The flowers are 0.3 cm across. The flowers are white to pale yellow. The flowers occur in paired groups in the axils of leaves. The follicles are 6-8 cm long by 0.8-1 cm wide. They are slender and pointed.

HABITAT

It is a subtropical plant. It grows in hot and arid areas. It is usually in places with a marked dry season. The dry season can be 6-11 months. It can grow on well-drained or seasonally flooded sandy or clay soils. In southern Africa it grows between 500-1,200 m above sea level. It grows in open woods, bushland between 100–1000 m altitude in China. It can be on the edges of mangroves and along rivers. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed.

NOTES

It is used in medicine. It is useful for tackling diabetes. There are about 25 Gymnema species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

REFERENCES

Ambasta, S.P. (Ed.), 2000, The Useful Plants of India. CSIR India. p 251

Elliot, W.R., & Jones, D.L., 1990, Encyclopedia of Australian Plants suitable for cultivation. Vol 5. Lothian. p 170

Facciola, S., 1998, Cornucopia 2: a Source Book of Edible Plants. Kampong Publications, p 32

Grivetti, L. E., 1980, Agricultural development: present and potential role of edible wild plants. Part 2: Sub-Saharan Africa, Report to the Department of State Agency for International Development. p 25

Grubben, G. J. H. and Denton, O. A. (eds), 2004, Plant Resources of Tropical Africa 2. Vegetables. PROTA, Wageningen, Netherlands. p 562

Hahn, K., et al, 2018, The use of wild plants for food: a national scale analysis for Burkina Faso (West Africa). FVSS FoodPlants Supplement

Harris, D. J., 2002, The vascular plants of the Dzanga-Sangha Reserve, Central African Republic. National Botanic Garden of Belgium, 2002. – 274 pages p 55

Jardin, C., 1970, List of Foods Used In Africa, FAO Nutrition Information Document Series No 2.p 79

Kuhnlein, H. V., et al, 2009, Indigenous Peoples' food systems. FAO Rome p 192

Kumari, B. & Solanki, H., 2019, The Traditional Knowledge of Wild Edible Leaf used by Tribal People in Chhattisgarh. International Journal of Plant and Environment (2019), Vol. 5(4) :284-292

Leger, S., 1997, A Description of Today's Use of Plants in West Bushmanland (Namibia). German Development Service. PO Box 220035, 14061 Berlin, Germany. http://www.sigridleger.de/book/

Li Ping-tao; Michael G. Gilbert, W. Douglas Stevens, ASCLEPIADACEAE Flora of China.

Martin, F.W. & Ruberte, R.M., 1979, Edible Leaves of the Tropics. Antillian College Press, Mayaguez, Puerto Rico. p 177

Raponda-Walker, A & Sillans, R., 1961, Les Plantes Utiles du Gabon. Editions Paul Lechevalier, Paris. p 98

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (1999). Survey of Economic Plants for Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (SEPASAL) database. Published on the Internet; http://www.rbgkew.org.uk/ceb/sepasal/internet [Accessed 30th March 2011] (As Marsdenia sylvestris)

Samydurai, P., et al, 2012, Wild habits of Kolli Hills being staple food of inhabitant tribes of eastern Ghats, Tamil Nadu, India. Indian Journal of Natural Products and Resources. 3(3) September 2012 pp 432-437

Seidemann J., 2005, World Spice Plants. Economic Usage, Botany, Taxonomy. Springer. p 171

Singh, H.B., Arora R.K.,1978, Wild edible Plants of India. Indian Council of Agricultural Research, New Delhi. p 26

Syst. veg. 6:57. 1820

Terra, G.J.A., 1973, Tropical Vegetables. Communication 54e Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, p 49

World Checklist of Useful Plant Species 2020. Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

PROVIDED BY **Food Plants International**

French, B.R. & Maynard, A.R. Food Plants International Database. Food Plants International

LICENCE CC BY-NC-SA 3.0

ONLINE FACT SHEET https://www.echocommunity.org/en/resources/9af6387f-05ac-4797-9aeb-b0e571d947c7