PLANT FACT SHEET

Bidens pilosa L.

GENUS *Bidens* **FAMILY** Asteraceae

COMMON NAMES Cobbler's pegs, Spanish needles

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Leaves - tea, Seeds, Flowers - tea, Vegetable

The seeds are used in making an Igorot rice wine called "sinitsit" in the Philippines.
The seeds are eaten, particularly by children (e.g. in Enga) in Papua New Guinea.
The young leaves are edible cooked. They should be cooked due to saponins.
The leaves are cooked in soups and stews. The young leaves can be dried for later use. Fresh they can only be stored for 3-4 days.
The flowers are also used as a substitute for tea.

DESCRIPTION

A small annual upright herb with small black seeds in heads. It is an erect branched herb 0.2 to 1.5 m tall. The branches or stems have parallel lines or ridges. The stems are four angled. The leaves are up to 15 cm long with the upper ones much smaller. The leaves are divided into 3-5 leaflets. The end leaflet is usually larger (3 cm x 9 cm). The edges of the leaves are toothed. The flowers occur at the end of branches. They are on long stalks. The flowers are brown or yellow. The seeds are black with 2-4 projections at the top. (The seeds often stick to clothes.)

HABITAT

It grows in tropical rainforest areas. It grows on many different soil types. It grows from near sea level to over 2000 m altitude. It suits humid locations. It needs plenty of moisture and is not drought tolerant. Very common and widely distributed from northern Luzon to southern Mindanao in the Philippines. It occurs and is widely used throughout Malawi. It can grow in arid places. In Sichuan and Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants grow from seed. Seed need light and good aeration for them to grow. Seeds can become dormant and last for many years but will still grow. Good manuring of soils gives better leaf yields. A spacing of 15 cm between plants is suitable.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It grows quickly. First leaves can be harvested 6 weeks after planting. Plants can be harvested for leaves 4-6 times over a 5-7 week period. Seed are produced 8-10 weeks after planting. Yields of leaves of 2 kg per metre square are possible.

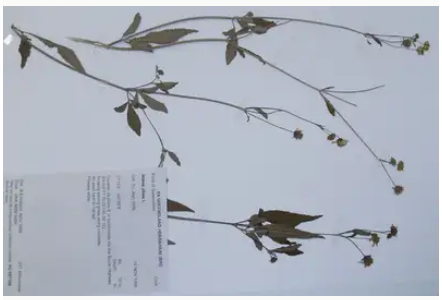
NOTES

This plant has been used in medicine and recent studies have shown these treatments are due to chemicals effective in controlling bacteria (gram positive types) and assisting liver function. Leaves are a good source of iodine. There are about 200 Bidens species. Most are in North America.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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