



PLANT FACT SHEET

Ocimum basilicum L.

GENUS *Ocimum* FAMILY Lamiaceae

COMMON NAMES Sweet basil

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Seeds, Flowers, Herb, Spice, Vegetable

The seeds are soaked in water and eaten. They can be eaten alone or used to flavour bread and other foods. The leaves are used raw or boiled to flavour foods. They are used to flavour tomato sauce, vinegar, soups, salads, omelettes and pesto sauce.

It yields an oil used in flavouring. It flavours sauces, pickles, meats and confectionary. The flowers are eaten fresh.

DESCRIPTION

An erect branched woody shrub. The branches are without hairs and smooth. The leaves are without hair and oblong with a more narrow tip and blunt base. The base of the stems is tinged red. The leaf stalk is 1.5 cm long. The leaf blade is 2.5-5 cm long by 1-2.5 cm wide. The flowers are somewhat purplish with very short stalks. The small nuts are oval and slightly flattened. They are smooth. Plants vary a lot and several varieties have been selected. They can have licorice, cinnamon or lemon flavours and vary in size.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. Found at low and medium altitudes throughout the Islands of the Philippines. It suits both the lowlands and the highlands in the tropics. It cannot stand frost. It suits warm and hot climates. It needs some shade in tropical areas. It needs protection from wind. It needs rich moist well drained soil. Soil should be at 25°-30°C for seed to germinate. It grows in savannah woodland. It can grow in arid places. In Hobart Botanical gardens. It suits hardiness zones 10-12. In Sichuan and Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is grown from seed. Seed should be sown 2-3 mm deep and covered with a light sand or soil. Seed germinate within 3-5 days. Seedlings are thinned out to 20 cm apart. Seedlings can be transplanted. If top shoots are picked off, a more bushy plant is produced and flowering is delayed.

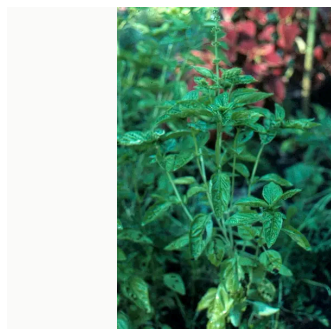
NOTES

There are between 100 and 150 *Ocimum* species. It has medicinal benefits including being antimicrobial. It possibly has anti-cancer properties.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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