PLANT FACT SHEET

Gaultheria procumbens L.

GENUS *Gaultheria* **FAMILY** Ericaceae

COMMON NAMES Wintergreen, Checkerberry, Teaberry

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Fruit, Berries, Leaves - tea

The leaves are used to make tea.
The young leaves and berries can be added to salads. They are spicy. The berries are eaten in pies.
The oil is extracted from the leaves and used to flavour foods.
The fruit are cooked and used for pies and jam.
CAUTION: The medicinal methyl salicylate common to wintergreen can be poisonous in large quantities

DESCRIPTION

A small shrub. It grows 15 cm high and spreads 90 cm wide. The leaves are glossy green and 5 cm long. They turn red in winter. The flowers are white or pale pink and in long clusters. The fruit is 12 mm across and red. The fruit has a fragrance when crushed.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It grows in poor soils and in forest clearings. It suits moist, shady locations. It is very cold hardy. It can tolerate drought once established. It can grow on poor acid soils. It suits hardiness zones 4-9.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed. The seed should be washed before planting. Stored seed needs 2-3 months of cold treatment before they will grow. Seeds germinate in 6 weeks at 20°C. Seedlings are planted out after a year. Semi-ripe cuttings can be used. Stems can be pegged down into the soil and take 12 months to form roots.

NOTES

There are about 170 Gaultheria species. It produced methyl salicylate used as a liniment.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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