



PLANT FACT SHEET

Amaranthus cruentus L.

GENUS *Amaranthus* FAMILY Amaranthaceae

COMMON NAMES Purple amaranth, Red amaranth

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Leaves, Vegetable, Flowers

The leaves and young plant are eaten cooked. They are also dried and stored.

The seeds are ground into flour and used to make bread. The seeds are popped and used to prepare candy.

CAUTION: This plant can accumulate nitrates if grown with high nitrogen inorganic fertilisers and these are poisonous.

The leaves can only be stored for 2-4 days.

DESCRIPTION

An annual erect plant. It grows to 2 m high. The stems are angular. It often branches in the upper section. It is smooth but may be hairy on younger plant parts. The young parts can be tinged purple. The leaves are oval to sword shaped and can be 10-15 cm long by 3-6 cm wide. They have a leaf stalk 1-7.5 cm long. The leaves often narrow towards the tip. They can also become thinner towards the base. There may be hairs on the midrib. The leaf may be tinged purple underneath. The flowers clusters are often branched and on side branches. The stiff branched flower arrangement at the top can be 15-25 cm long. The fruit is oval and the seed can be 1-1.3 mm across. The seed is dark brown but pale brown forms are used as grain in Central America.

HABITAT

It grows in the tropics and more temperate regions. In the tropics it is mainly in the highlands. In Papua New Guinea it grows best between 1,200 and 2,200 m altitude. It needs a night temperature above 15°C and preferably a day temperatures above 25°C. It is best in fertile, well drained soil. In Argentina it grows between sea level and 1,000 m above sea level. It suits hardiness zones 8-11. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed if the soil is warm. Seeds are small and grow easily. They can be put in a nursery and then transplanted after 2-3 weeks. Cuttings of growing plants root easily.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Yields of 800-1500 kg per hectare are achieved. Plants can be harvested by pulling up the entire plant or by removing leaves over several harvests.

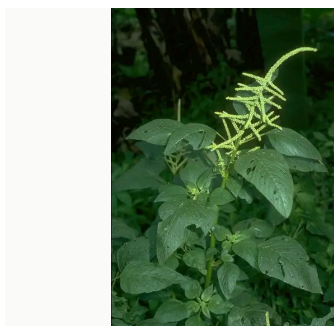
NOTES

Seed (Fresh weight) Protein: 15 %. There are about 60 *Amaranthus* species.
It can help control nematode populations.
It is a C4 plant.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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