PLANT FACT SHEET

Launaea taraxacifolia (Willd.) Amin ex C.Jeffrey

GENUS *Launaea* **FAMILY** Asteraceae

COMMON NAMES African lettuce

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Vegetable, Plant - salt

The leaves are eaten as a vegetable. Young leaves are eaten fresh in salads. They are also cooked and used in soups and sauces.
The plant is burnt to provide edible salt.

DESCRIPTION

A herb. It keeps growing from year to year. It grows 150 cm tall. The stems are erect and often woody at the base. The leaves at the base are in a ring and along the stem are alternate. They are narrowly oval or spoon shaped and 4-20 cm long by 1-9 cm wide. They can have lobes along the side. The lower leaves taper at the base. The flowers are 12-22 in a flower head. The fruit is 3-5 mm long. It has a slight beak and white pappus hairs.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in savannah and arid places. It does best between 600-1,000 m but will grow to 1,700 m altitude. It is best in slightly humid conditions but needs full sun. It cannot tolerate shade. It has a low water requirement.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. Plants can be grown from sections of the roots. Root cuttings 10 cm long are planted horizontally.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The leaves become more bitter as the plant flowers. Young leaves are picked from the ring of leaves.

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