PLANT FACT SHEET

Mucuna gigantea (Willd.) DC.

GENUS *Mucuna* **FAMILY** Fabaceae

COMMON NAMES Velvet bean, Burny Bean, Elephant cowitch, Sea bean

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Pods

The seeds can be eaten but must be cooked first.

DESCRIPTION

A vigorous climbing plant. It keeps growing from year to year. It is woody with coarse rough stems. It looses its leaves during the year. The leaves have 3 leaflets which are smooth and broad and oval. The 2 side leaflets are not equal on either side of their midribs. The leaflet blade is 10-14 cm long by 5-8 cm wide. They are dark green above and paler underneath. The veins are prominent and the tip is pointed. The leaf stalk is 4.5-12 cm long. The flowers are large and green to yellow and like pea flowers. They are 3-5 cm long. They occur in groups of 3 and these are part of larger clusters. The flower stalks are 10-30 cm long and in the axils of leaves on old stems. The flowers hang downwards. The fruit is a broad, flat, woody pod. It is 8-15 cm long by 3-5 cm wide. It is prominently winged along the side. The pod has prickly hairs. There are 2-6 seeds which are round and reddish brown. They are 2-3 cm across.

HABITAT

A tropical and subtropical plant. Plants grow naturally in monsoon vine forests. Often they are near the sea. They need well-drained soil. They can stand slight frosts. In Africa it grows up to 1,800 m altitude. It can grow in arid places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed. The seed need treatment to help them to grow. Seeds can float for long periods by water.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants grow very quickly. In Australia, plants flower from August to October and fruit in November to December.

NOTES

The hairs on the pods can irritate the skin. There are about 100 Mucuna species. They grow in tropical places.

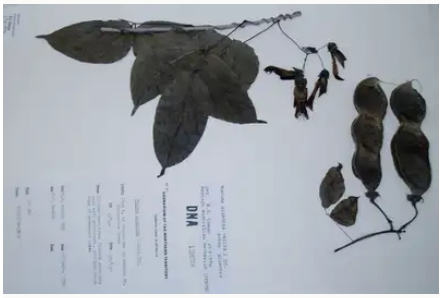
PICTURES



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