



PLANT FACT SHEET

Luffa acutangula (L.) Roxburgh

GENUS *Luffa* FAMILY Cucurbitaceae

COMMON NAMES Angled loofah

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Fruits, Vegetable, Seeds, Seeds - oil, Flowers

The immature fruit are cooked and eaten as a vegetable. The ridges are removed with a vegetable peeler. The fruit are boiled, steamed or stir-fried. They can be added to soups, stews and curries. The fruit skin is made into chutney.

The leaves are edible. They can be eaten in salads or cooked as a vegetable.

The flower buds are dipped in batter and sauteed.

Mature seeds are roasted, salted and eaten as a snack.

DESCRIPTION

A herb. It is a pumpkin family plant. It is an annual climber with square stems. They have 4 to 7 branched tendrils which attach to objects helping the plant to have a climbing habit. Leaves are pale green, hairy and shallowly five lobed. The leaves have a bad smell when rubbed. Male and female flowers are separate. Male flowers are in clusters, female flowers singly. (Ratio 43:1) Flowers open late in the afternoon and stay open during the night. The flowers are yellow. Fruit can be up to 40 cm long and with 10 long ridges. It is green-brown outside and white inside. Three varieties have been distinguished.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows from sea level to 500 m altitude in the hot humid tropics. It won't tolerate excessive rainfall so does best in drier areas or in the dry season in wetter areas. Day temperatures above 25 °C are suitable. Some varieties require short day length. Adding additional nitrogen fertiliser can stimulate female flower formation in short day varieties. In Nepal it grows between 1000-1600 m altitude. It can grow in arid places. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Seeds are sown direct at 40 x 80 cm spacing and need stakes to climb. Because seeds can have a hard coating soaking seed in water for 24 hours before planting can assist. 5 kg of seed per hectare are required. The plant benefits from full sunlight. Good soil fertility is beneficial. The soil needs to be well drained and adequate organic matter helps. Pinching out the growing tips when plants are 1.5 to 2 metres long can promote fruit development. Hand pollination once female flowers develop helps fruit set. This is best done in the evening.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Immature fruit are ready 6-10 weeks after planting. On maturity the fruit become bitter and inedible. Fruit do not store well so are harvested when they are to be used.

NOTES

There are 6 *Luffa* species.

The seeds are 26% oil.

It possibly has anti-cancer properties.

PICTURES



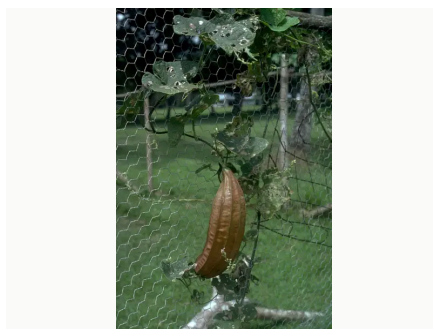
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