PLANT FACT SHEET

Ipomoea violacea L.

GENUS *Ipomoea* **FAMILY** Convolvulaceae

COMMON NAMES Fongaar

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Roots, Leaves

The fleshy root is cooked and eaten like a yam.

DESCRIPTION

A tuberous rooted vine with large round leaves. It is a vigorous climber reaching 4-5 m high. The vine is irregular in cross section. The leaves are large and rounded. They are 9-15 cm across. The leaf stalk is 6-12 cm long. The flowers can occur as one or several together. The sepals become large and fleshy in the fruit. The capsule is a large dry one with a fleshy lid and has 4 or less black seeds inside. The seeds are 8 mm long by 12 mm wide.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It occurs at low altitudes probably up to 1300 m. It is a plant of the drier open woodland areas. It grows naturally near the beach.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from top pieces of the fleshy root. They need a trellis or tree for the long vines to climb over. The tubers are harvested when the leaves die back.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The tuber is reported to be able to be stored.

Planting instructions

Fongaar

Where did the name come from?

This root crop is grown in the Moorehead area south of the River Fly. People in that area treat it as if it is another variety of yam. It is not a yam but a [lant in the sweet potato family. It has a number of different names in Tok Ples. These include:-
Hangaar Arufe
Fongaar Kondobl

Scientists have given this plant the name Ipomoea tuba .

What is the plant like?

The plant has a long angular vine 5 to 6 metres long and it climbs up stakes. The leaves are almost round adn are produced singly along the vine. Flowers are somewhat like sweet potato flowers and are produced at the top of the vine. Under the ground it produces a group of large fleshy roots shaped like cassava roots. These are harvested after the vine and leaves die back. The flesh inside the root is white. There is slight variation in the plant with both long and more rounded tubers. There is also some variation in leaf shape.

In some places the plant grows wild and is not eaten.

How is it grown?

People plant a section of the top of the fattened root which first grows vines and leaves, then the thickened storage organ is produced. The planting time depends on rains. In the Morehead area they can be planted in November if the rains come but are otherwise planted in December. They can be ready for harvest by July at the earliest and more commonly in September. So they take 7 - 9 months to grow to maturity.

Other parts of the fattened root can be used for planting.

The root can be stored for some time after harvest and this is normally done along with yams in the yam houses. They can be stored for 4 to 5 months.

How is it used?

The roots are simply roasted and eaten in the same way as yams.

The thickened roots can be up to 65cm long and 12 cm wide. They can weigh up to 2.5kg.

Pests and diseases.

These have not been studied. An obvious leaf spot occurs on the leaves. This is most likely due to a fungus

NOTES

There are about 500 Ipomoea species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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