PLANT FACT SHEET

Hibiscus cannabinus L.

GENUS *Hibiscus* **FAMILY** Malvaceae

COMMON NAMES Vegetable kenaf, Indian hemp

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Seeds, Pods, Fruit, Flowers, Seeds - oil, Bark, Gum, Vegetable

The leaves are eaten cooked as a vegetable. They are also used as a substitute for tamarind for curries. They are used in soups. The leaves are cooked with the aid of potashes.
The seeds are roasted and eaten. They are also fermented. The seeds yield an edible oil.
The flowers are eaten cooked as a vegetable.
The bark is sweet and is chewed by children.

DESCRIPTION

A herb. It can grow from seed each year or keep growing from year to year. It grows up to 3.5 m high. It has a few sharp spines. The leaf stalk is 6-20 cm long. The leaf blade has 2 forms. The leaves lower on the stem are heart shaped and those higher on the stem have 4-7 lobes arranged like fingers on a hand. These lobes are sword shaped and 2-12 cm long by 0.6-2 cm wide. They have teeth around the edge. They taper at the tip. The flowers are yellow, white or ivory and red at the base. They occur singly in the axils of leaves. They are large and up to 10 cm across. They have very short stalks. The fruit is a capsule about 1.5 cm across. The seeds are kidney shaped.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is cultivated in S China. It can grow in well-drained sandy soils and in dry but seasonally waterlogged places. It grows between 15-2,130 m above sea level. It grows in areas with an annual rainfall between 500-635 mm. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 10-12. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is usually grown from seeds. It can be grown from cuttings. Seeds will last for about 8 months. Seeds germinate best at 35°C.

NOTES

There are about 220 Hibiscus species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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