PLANT FACT SHEET

# *Dioscorea villosa* L.

**GENUS** *Dioscorea* **FAMILY** Dioscoreaceae

**COMMON NAMES** Devil's bones, Colicroot, Rheumatism root

## EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

**Edible parts:** Root, Tuber

The tubers are boiled then cut in pieces and washed in running water to remove the toxic element. The tubers are eaten whole or pounded into flour for bread.

## DESCRIPTION

A climbing yam plant. It can be 5 m tall. It keeps growing from year to year. It has slender rhizomes. They are twisted, long and woody. The leaves are simple. The stem has bulbils in the axils of leaves. The leaves are heart shaped and 5-10 cm long. The flowers are small and yellow-green. The are in drooping spikes in the axils of leaves. Male and female flowers are borne separately. The fruit is a capsule that in longer than wide. The seeds are winged at the base.

## HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It is best in rich, moist soils. It needs a protected sunny position. It is resistant to frost but damaged by drought. In Assam is grows up to 1,600 m above sea level.

## PRODUCTION

### Cultivation

It can be grown from seed or by dividing the rhizome.

## NOTES

This yam is used for contraceptives. There are about 650 species of Dioscorea.

## PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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