PLANT FACT SHEET

Oenanthe javanica (Blume) DC.

GENUS *Oenanthe* **FAMILY** Apiaceae

COMMON NAMES Water drop wort, Water celery

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Seeds, Spice, Vegetable, Roots

The plant is often eaten raw or cooked. They are boiled or steamed.
The leaves are used in soups and salads and with chicken.
CAUTION Although not known to contain the very poisonous oenanthotoxin it contains a hallucinatory drug myristicin.

DESCRIPTION

A herb. This plant is a hollow stemmed creeping green leafy vegetable. The stem is often up to 100 cm long and normally lies along the ground and turns up near the tip. The leaves are finely divided like carrot tops but the size, shape and colour of the leaves can vary quite a bit, even on the one plant. The leaves often have leaf sheaths which wrap around the stem. The flowers occur at the ends of the branches and are a group of small white flowers. Several kinds occur with different colours and leaf sizes. It mostly grows near water and will float on water.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It mostly occurs between 700 and 2800 m altitude in the tropics. But it also grows down to the coast where it is becoming more popular. It grows in wetlands. It also grows in China, Indonesia and other Asian countries. In Northeastern India it grows between 1,900-3,000 m above sea level. It grows best between 15° to 25°C. It suits hardiness zones 9-12. Bontoc. At MARDI. In Yunnan. In Sichuan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

This plant often grows wild. These self sown plants are not as tasty as the cultivated types but they are eaten. The plant is also grown in gardens. It is planted by using cuttings. Often 5 or 6 cuttings are planted in a hole made with a digging stick. In moist soil the plants establish quickly and easily. It is also possible to grow the plants by seeds, but these are rarely used in Papua New Guinea. The leaves and young tips of the plant are often eaten raw or cooked.

Planting instructions

Water dropwort

Oenanthe javanica

The plant.

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The flowers occur at the ends of the branches and are a group of small white flowers.

Where does the plant grow ?

In Papua New Guinea this is one of the commonest green leafy vegetables of the Highland areas. In recent times it has been introduced into coastal areas and still grows wuite well.

In the highland areas it is common in gardens up to 2600 metres altitude and has been seen growing up to 3400 m altitude.

It normally grows near creeks or in wet or damp patches in gardens. The hollow stemmed branches can actually float on water and the plants seem to thrive along drains and ditches.

This plant is also grown as food in several other countries. It is common in Indonesia and Malaysia and is also grown in India, Vietnam, China, Taiwan and a number of other South East Asian and Pacific countries. It is a traditional vegetable with ceremonial importance in Japan.

Names

Because the leaf shape and appearance of this plant can vary considerably, it has had some different scientific names. The correct name is Oenanthe javanica and it was given this name by a scientists called De Candolle in 1830. The other most commonly used scientific name has been Oenanthe stolonifera but as the two plants are the same this name has now been replaced.

It has no commonly accepted English or Tok Pisin name. Names such as water celery and water dropwort have been used in English. Because several other Oenanthe spp plants are very poisonous, it is probably not a good idea to just use "oenanthe" as the name and run the risk of confusing a good vegetable with other poisonous plants. It has many different Tok Ples names.

Growing water dropwort.

This plant often grows wild. These self sown plants are not as tasty as the cultivated types but they are eaten.

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Water dropwort as food.

The leaves and young tips of the plant are often eaten raw or cooked.

The amount of different nutrients in a 100g sample of this food is shown in this table.

moisture energy protein calcium iron proVitA provitC
90.6% 28cals 1.8g 113mg 3mg 2190µg 14 mg

A chemical called myristicin has been shown to occur in water dropwort. Because of this, it may not be good to eat large amounts of this vegetable.

NOTES

Chemical composition: Protein = 1.51%. Fat = 0.28%. Carbohydrate = 2.47%. Ash = 1.4%
It has 24.2 mg per 100 g dry weight and 14.7 mg fresh weight of alpha-tocopherol (Vitamin E).
Water dropwort
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PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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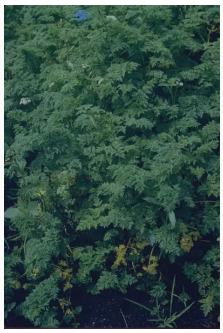

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