PLANT FACT SHEET

Pistia stratiotes L.

GENUS *Pistia* **FAMILY** Araceae

COMMON NAMES Water Lettuce, Nile cabbage

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Vegetable, Salt

The young leaves are cooked and eaten as a vegetable. They are also added to soups.
CAUTION: The plant contains stinging oxalate crystals. These can be removed by boiling and changing the cooking water. The plant also accumulates heavy metals in polluted streams.
Ash from the burned plants is used as a salt substitute.

DESCRIPTION

A floating herb. This plant looks something like a lettuce and grows on water. The water needs to be stagnant or slow moving. The leaves are produced in a rosette. They are light green. The leaves are hairy and have 7-15 ridges. The plant sends out runners. These end with a tuft of leaves. The leaves overlap and are without stalks. They arise from the same level. Plants are of separate sexes. The female flowers occur singly and are at the base. Male flowers have a single stamen and occur as 2-8 flowers together. They are at the end of the plant.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is common and widely distributed in low and medium altitudes in the Philippines. It occurs on the surface of stagnant water and slow moving streams. It grows in water fields, lakes, ponds. It occurs in both the tropics and subtropics. It needs temperatures above 12°C. It grows in water rich in nutrients. It is sensitive to frost. It suits hardiness zones 9-11. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from pieces of the runners. They can also grow from leaves. They can be grown from seeds.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Leaves are available throughout the year.

NOTES

Plants contain stinging crystals. There is only one Pistia species. It can be invasive.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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