



PLANT FACT SHEET

Piper betle L.

GENUS *Piper* FAMILY Piperaceae

COMMON NAMES Betel pepper

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Fruit

It is used as a masticatory with betel nut. The leaves and /or fruit are used. Lime is added to make the mixture more alkaline so that the chemical constituents are activated.

The fresh leaves are used to flavour Chinese dishes and soups.

DESCRIPTION

A woody vine which attaches to trees by roots at the nodes on the main vine. The vegetative branches form roots at the nodes but the fruiting branches do not. The stems are 2.5-5 mm thick. The leaf stalk is 2-5 cm long. It has a fine powdery covering. The leaves can be 7-15 cm long and 5-11 cm wide. The leaves are papery or slightly leathery. The flowers are separately male and female. Male spikes are thinner and longer than female. The spikes droop. The fruit is composed of fused parts making a compound fruit.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It occurs in the lowlands and up to about 700 m altitude. It needs a reasonably good rainfall. In the Cairns Botanical Gardens. It suits hardiness zones 10-12. At MARDI.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from cuttings of the main vine. It also grows wild. It needs stakes or a tree to climb. Fruiting branches can be increased by pruning.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants can last for 10-12 years.

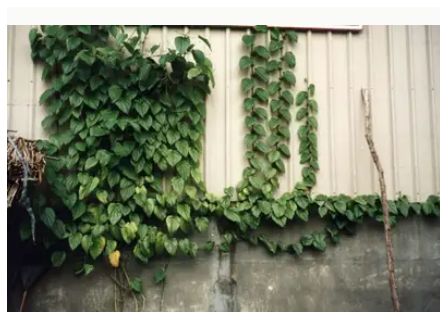
NOTES

There are between 1000-2000 *Piper* species. They are mostly in the tropics. It has 7.6 mg per 100 g dry weight and 4.3 mg fresh weight of alpha-tocopherol (Vitamin E).

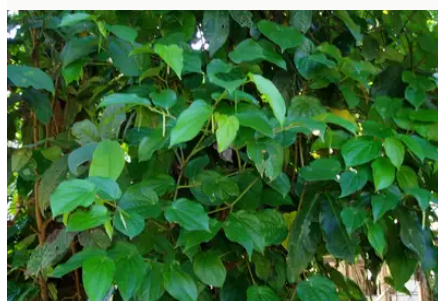
PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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