PLANT FACT SHEET

Rungia klossii S. Moore

GENUS *Rungia* **FAMILY** Acanthaceae

COMMON NAMES Rungia, Aimbe, Kantaba, Moku, Tani

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves

The leaves are eaten raw or cooked.

DESCRIPTION

A herb. Rungia is a small clumpy much branched leafy vegetable. Dark green and yellow and green marked leaf colours occur. It grows to about 40 cm high. It produces a pale blue flower. At least 20 different varieties occur being distinguished by size, shape and colour of leaves.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It mostly grows from 1000 to 2000 metres altitude but will grow down to sea level and up to 2,700 m. It is only known naturally from Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from rooted stems or cuttings. It only occurs as a cultivated plant. Some feral and relatively short lived plants can be found in old garden sites. It needs reasonably fertile soil, preferably moist but will grow in most soils. The young leaf tips are eaten raw or cooked. It requires a fairly fertile soil and a damp area. Plants are put about 50cm apart. It is mostly grown in mixed cropping situations with sweet potato or Setaria pitpit. The plant is grown from cuttings which are about 25 cm long and a clump are sown together. These stems often already have roots developing from the nodes or quickly develop roots. Rungia is planted at any time of the year. Regular picking keeps branches short and productive of leaves. It grows reasonably slowly. Once established the young tips (2 or 3 leaves) are picked regularly. The shoot tips and upper leaves are harvested starting about 2-4 months after planting and continuing at 1-2 monthly intervals for 2 years or more. Regular picking keeps branches short and productive of leaves.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It grows reasonably slowly. Yields can be 2 kg/plant/year. The harvested tips weigh about 0.8 g each. If the plants were spaced at 50cm spacing this would give a yield of 4 kg per square metre of garden. The leaves are eaten raw or cooked. After harvesting they will not keep very long. (2-3 days).

Planting instructions

Rungia

Scientific name:Rungia klossii

The Rungia plant.

It is a clumpy much branched bush about 40cm high. Often the leaves are dark green but varieties occur with yellow patterns on the leaves. It has a pale blue flower. At least 20 different varieties occur.

Names.

This plant has the scientific name Rungia klossii. It was given this name in 1916 after the plant was first collected on a botany expedition into West Irian in 1912. This expedition was organised by a Mr. Baden Kloss from the Museum at Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, so the second part of the name was called after him.

In English it has no common name but could easily just be called Rungia. It has Tok Ples names in highland areas of Papua New Guinea. eg.

Place Tok ples name
Mendi taine
Tari kereba
Eastern Highlands moku

Where does Rungia grow?

Rungia is only known from Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya. It occurs in the highlands and grows up to about 1900 metres altitude. In recent times it has been taken down to the coast but as it doesn't grow fast enough to be able to compete with weeds in coastal areas, it is less important.

In some areas such as Telefomin the plant is only poorly known as a wild plant and people pick leaves from self sown plants in the bush. But in most other highland areas it is one of the most popular and most widely cultivated green leafy vegetables.

The most important areas for Rungia are between 1000 and 2000 metres altitude.

How do you grow Rungia?

Rungia is grown from cuttings. Often cuttings about 25cm long are used. These stems often already have roots developing from the nodes or quickly develop roots. A number of these cuttings are often planted together giving a clump of plants. These grow slowly at first. It requires a fairly fertile soil and a damp area. Plants are put about 50cm apart.

Rungia is planted at any time of the year. It takes about 3 to 4 months for a plant to be maturely established. Once established the young tips (2 or 3 leaves) are picked regularly. Regular picking keeps branches short and productive of leaves. The leaves are picked at 1 or 2 monthly intervals for a couple of years.

Rungia is commonly grown in new sweet potato gardens with either sweet potato or highland pitpit in highland gardens.

How much is produced?

The tips that are picked weigh about 0.8g. One plant produces about 2 kg of leaf tips over a one year period. If the plants were spaced at 50cm spacing this would give a yield of 4kg per square metre of garden.

Rungia as food.

The young leaf tips are eaten raw or cooked. After harvesting they will not keep very long. (2-3 days).

Food value (per 100 g of edible portion)

moisture energy protein calcium iron proVitA provitC
% cals g mg mg µg mg
87.9 33 2.5 272

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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