PLANT FACT SHEET

Celosia argentea Linn.

GENUS *Celosia* **FAMILY** Amaranthaceae

COMMON NAMES Lagos spinach, Cock's comb, Quail grass

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Seeds - oil, Vegetable, Flowers, Tea

The tender leaves and young flowers are cooked and eaten as a vegetable. It is best eaten before flowering. The dried leaves can be added to wheat flour and cooked. They are used in soups, sauces and stews. It is used a flavouring.
An edible oil can be extracted from the seeds.
The red colouring from the flowers can be used to colour lamb stew red. They are also used for pan fried cake.

DESCRIPTION

An erect short lived annual herb up to 1 m tall. The leaves are alternate and light green. They are 2 cm wide and 6 cm long. They are dark green and longer on flowering shoots. The flower spike grows on the end of the main stem and is red or purple. It is 20 cm long. The seeds are small (1 mm across). Two kinds occur as red and green forms.

HABITAT

It is a tropical plant. It grows well in the lowlands humid forest zone. It suits damp humid places and is often on clayey soil. The plant is widespread as a wild plant at low altitudes. It grows up to 1700 m in Ethiopia. Temperatures between 25-30°C at night and 30-35°C in the day are best. It needs good sunlight and does best in soils with high organic matter. It can grow in light shade and in dry conditions. In Nepal it grows up to 1600 m altitude. It can grow in arid places. In Yunnan. In Sichuan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

The plant can be grown by seeds. The seeds are very small so can be mixed with sand to allow more even sowing. These plants are often grown just as ornamentals. The seed are broadcast then mulched with dry grass, which is removed once the seeds have germinated. Seedlings do not transplant easily. They can be transplanted after 2-3 weeks. It is good for intercropping amongst other vegetables.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Harvesting of leaves can commence about 4-5 weeks after planting. Tops can be cut off over a period of 3-5 months. It grows slowly at first, therefore repeated picking of tips gives better production than harvesting whole small plants.

NOTES

Leaves contain nitre which makes them diuretic. There are about 40-50 Celosia species. The leaves are rich in iron and therefore good for anaemia.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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