PLANT FACT SHEET

Cucumis metuliferus E. Mey. ex Naudin

GENUS *Cucumis* **FAMILY** Cucurbitaceae

COMMON NAMES African Horned cucumber, Kiwano

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Seeds, Vegetable, Leaves

The peeled fruit are eaten raw. They can also be cut open and sun dried for storage and use in preserves.
The young leaves are stripped and cooked then eaten.
The seeds are pounded and used for flavouring.
CAUTION: If the plants are bitter they need to be used with caution.

DESCRIPTION

A pumpkin family plant. It is an annual plant. It grows to 0.5 m tall and spreads to 1.5 m wide. The stems are trailing and hairy. The tendrils are curled and do not branch. The leaves have 3 lobes and are heart shaped. The edges of the leaves have teeth. The flowers are funnel shaped. and yellow. They open into five lobes. Male and female flowers occur on the same plant. The female flower is above a prickly green ovary which enlarges to become the fruit. The fruit are oblong and spiny and change from green to orange as they ripen. They are 12 cm long and 6 cm across. The fleshy pulp surrounding the seeds is bright green. The seeds are white. It tastes and smells like a cucumber. The skin is not eaten.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It requires conditions similar to cucumbers. It prefers light well drained soil. It needs a protected sunny position. It is drought and frost tender. It grows at low and medium elevations in Zimbabwe. It grows between 210-1,800 m above sea level. It can grow in arid places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. They take 8-16 days to germinate in warm soil.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants grow rapidly. They flower and set fruit in 6-8 weeks. It is then 7 weeks to maturity.

NOTES

There are about 25 Cucumis species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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