PLANT FACT SHEET

Physalis peruviana L.

GENUS *Physalis* **FAMILY** Solanaceae

COMMON NAMES Cape gooseberry

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Leaves, Vegetable

The ripe fruit are eaten fresh or cooked. They are used for jam. They can be dried, preserved, stewed, pureed, or used in pies, cakes, jellies and sauces.
Roasted seeds are pickled.
The leaves have been used instead of hops in beer. The leaves are also boiled and used as a potherb.

DESCRIPTION

Perennial herbs which grow to 45-90 cm high. They are often grown as annuals. It is only slightly branched but is hairy. The branches are purplish and ribbed. They are spreading. The leaf blade is 6-15 cm long by 4-10 cm wide. The leaves are heart shaped at the base and taper to the tip. They are slightly wavy and toothed along the edge. The flowers occur singly and hang down in the axils of leaves. The flowers are white with violet anthers and slightly spotted petals. The fruit is a berry 1-1.5 cm across. They are orange-yellow or pale brown. This is inside an inflated husk. The seeds are yellow and 2 mm across. There are several named cultivated varieties.

HABITAT

A temperate plant. It grows in the tropical highlands. It suits warm climates. It does best in warm sunny conditions. It needs well drained soil. It is best free from severe frosts and strong winds. In Nepal it grows between 900-2200 m altitude. Plants are not killed by a slight frost. In Indonesia plants are found between 700-2300 m altitude but fruit best above 1500 m. In the Andes it grows between 2,000-2,800 m above sea level. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 8-10. Tasmania Herbarium. In Yunnan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed. They are broadcast over the soil. Seeds should be 1.5 cm deep in loose soil. Seed germinate irregularly. Plants should be spaced 45 cm apart. In the tropics plants keep growing from year to year but in the subtropics they regrow from seed each year. Plants can be grown from softwood cuttings from the upper parts of the shoots. Seedlings can be transplanted.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants produce in 1 year. A single plant can produce 300 fruit. Fruit can be stored for several months in dry conditions.

NOTES

There are about 75-100 Physalis species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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