PLANT FACT SHEET

Cenchrus biflorus Roxb.

GENUS *Cenchrus* **FAMILY** Poaceae

COMMON NAMES Sandbur grass

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Seeds, Cereal

Seeds are eaten raw, used in bread or for making porridge.
It is also used to make a drink as a milk substitute.

DESCRIPTION

An annual grass. It grows 10-60 cm high. It forms tufts. It has runners, The leaves are alternate and simple. They are 2-25 cm long and 2-7 cm wide. The flowers are green. They are in a spike like panicle. This is 2-15 cm long and has 1-3 spikelets.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows on sand dunes and sandy plains. It is collected in the Sahel. It suits areas with 260-650 mm annual rainfall. It cannot tolerate frost. It can grow in salty or alkaline soils. It grows from sea level to 1,300 m above sea level. It can grow in arid places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It can be grown from seed. Seed germinate best at 35°C.

Harvesting and Seed Production

The seeds fall from the plant and are swept up. They are pounded in a mortar then winnowed in the wind.

NOTES

There are about 23 Cenchrus species. They are in the tropical to warm temperate regions. Chemical composition (Sudan sample): Sulphur = 0.20% (dry). Potassium = 0.18% - Magnesium = 0.7% (dry). Calcium = 0.07% (dry). Na = 0.01% (dry). K = 0.17% (dry). Zinc = 52 mg/kg-1 (dry). Iron = 71 mg/kg-1 (dry). Manganese = 22 mg/kg-1 (dry). Copper = 5 mg/kg-1 (dry). Aluminium = 124 mg/kg-1 (dry). Fatty acids (saturated): 14:0 = <0.1g/100g-1. 16:0 = 23.8. 18:0 = 4.0. 22:0 = <0.1g/100g-1. 24:0 = <0.1g/100g-1; (monosaturated): 16:1 = 3.0. 18:1 = 30.2. 20.1 = <0.1g/100g-1; (polyunsaturated): 18.2 = 35.7. 18:3 = 1.9.

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