PLANT FACT SHEET

Saccharum edule Hasskarl

GENUS *Saccharum* **FAMILY** Poaceae

COMMON NAMES Long pitpit, Duruka

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Flowers, Vegetable

The unopened flower is eaten raw or cooked. Often it is cooked in coconut milk. It can be steamed, roasted, fried or added to soups.

DESCRIPTION

A grass. It is a plant in the sugarcane family grown for the edible unopened flower. Plants grow 2-3 m tall and have thinner canes than sugarcane. It produces suckers near the base so that normally a clump of stalks is produced. At one season of the year it produces a seed head or flower which remains inside the top of the plant and is the part that is eaten. Several cultivated varieties occur which differ in colour, height and season of flowering.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It is common in coastal areas and will grow up to about 1800 m altitude in the tropics. It is commonly grown in old gardens before they return to forest. It is common in coastal areas in Asian and Pacific countries including the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and Fiji and also in Indonesia.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It is grown from cuttings of the stalks. In fertile soil, cut plants will re-shoot from the base. The cuttings need adequate moisture at planting. Cuttings about 30 cm long are used. To avoid cuttings drying out they need to be planted soon after cutting.

Coastal pitpit stalks can be planted at any time of the year. It takes 6-9 months from planting till a crop is ready to harvest. But the time of flowering is coastal pitpit is controlled by the sun. Early in the year about February to March most plants develop a thickened clump of leaves at the top. When these are broken off and opened by removing the outside leaves the very fine yellow unopened flower is seen. It is this flower which is eaten.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It takes 6-9 months to maturity. In most cultivars, flowering is seasonal.

NOTES

There are 35-40 Saccharum species.
In The Plant List as Saccharum spontaneum var. edule.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



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