PLANT FACT SHEET

Momordica balsamina L.

GENUS *Momordica* **FAMILY** Cucurbitaceae

COMMON NAMES Balsam apple, Apple Balsam

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruits, Leaves, Seeds, Roots, Vegetable

The young fruit are cooked as a vegetable. They are boiled or fried. They are also eaten raw. They are used in stews and pickled. Caution: The ripe fruit cause diarrhoea.
They are used as a flavouring.
The young leaves and tendrils are used as a potherb.
The seeds are eaten after steeping in salt water and cooking. Without treatment they are poisonous.

DESCRIPTION

A pumpkin family plant. It is a herb or vine. It can grow each year from seed or keep growing from year to year. The leaves have stalks. These are 1-5 cm long. The leaves are 4-7.5 cm across by 4-7 cm wide. They are round or with 3-5 lobes like fingers on a hand. The lobes are narrowly sword shaped. They have dots on both surfaces. The flowers are yellow. The flowers are separately male and female on the same plant. The fruit are oval but narrowed towards both ends. They are smooth or warty. They are smaller than Momordica charantia.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows in tropical and subtropical places. It is usually on sandy soils near rivers. In Nepal plants grow to about 600 m altitude. In Africa it grows in drier places. It grows from sea level to 1,600 m altitude in Africa. In Pakistan it grows to 300 m altitude. It can grow in arid places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are grown from seed or tubers. It climbs over fences and huts.

Harvesting and Seed Production

In Rajasthan in India it produces between August to October.

NOTES

There are about 45-50 Momordica species. The fruits are cathartic due to momordicin.

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