PLANT FACT SHEET

Plectranthus esculentus N. E. Br.

GENUS *Plectranthus* **FAMILY** Lamiaceae

COMMON NAMES Kaffir potato, Hausa potato

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Tubers, Roots, Vegetable

The tubers are boiled and often added to other vegetables in soups. The tubers are washed then boiled in their skins. They can be dried and stored.
They can also be pickled.

DESCRIPTION

A herb or small shrub. It keeps growing from year to year. It grows 60 cm high. It can lie along the ground. It loses it leaves during the year. The leaves are fleshy and opposite. They are 5-8 cm long by 1-3 cm wide. They are narrowly oval. There are rounded teeth along the edge. The stems are angular. Some of the branches near the base bend down and grow into the ground to form long tubers. They grow from a central point like fingers on a hand. The tubers grow in clusters and are large. They can be 10 cm long and 2 cm wide. The flowers are yellow. They have a faint smell of tar.

HABITAT

A tropical plant. It grows naturally in southern tropical Africa. It grows in dry rocky and sandy soils. It grows between 600-1,900 m above sea level. It is hardy and needs frost free conditions. The best conditions for growth are 15-28°C. They need an annual rainfall of 700-1,100 mm. A soil pH of 6.5-7 is suitable. It can grow in arid places.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants are normally grown from cuttings. It can be grown from tubers and small bulbils in the axils.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Tubers are harvested 180-200 days after planting. Yields of 2-6 tonnes per hectare have been recorded. A tuber can weigh 1.8 kg.

NOTES

There are about 250 Plectranthus species. They are mainly in the tropics. It has good food value.

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