



PLANT FACT SHEET

Akebia quinata (Houtt.) Decne.

GENUS *Akebia* FAMILY Lardizabalaceae

COMMON NAMES Five leaf akebia, Chocolate Vine

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Fruit, Leaves, Shoots, Vine

The fruit is eaten raw. The skin of the fruit is bitter but it is fried and eaten. The fruit can also be pureed and made into a drink.

The soft young shoots are used in salads. They are also pickled in salt.

The leaves can be used for tea.

DESCRIPTION

A climber which grows 12 m long. It twines around objects and climbs. The stems are dark purple-red. Where winters are mild they keep their leaves year round. The leaves are made up of 5 oval leaflets. Each leaflet is about 5 cm long. Male and female flowers are separate. The flowers have a sweet smell and appear in clusters. Female flowers are purplish-brown and 2-3 cm across. They are cup-shaped. The male flowers are smaller and rose-purple. The fruit is 5-10 cm long and 5 cm wide. It is sausage shaped and grey-violet. The seeds are black in a white pulp. There are 40-50 seeds. The pulp is edible.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It grows naturally in mountainous areas in Japan and Korea. It needs well drained moist soil. It can grow in acid or alkaline soils. It can grow in shade but does better in sunlight. Plants are hardy to -20°C, when dormant but damaged by frost when in shoot. In mild winters they keep their leaves. It suits hardiness zones 5-10. It grows in Sichuan.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

Plants can be grown from seed. If possible use fresh seed or for stored seed give it one months cold treatment. Seed should be sown on the surface of the soil. The seed usually germinates in 1 - 3 months at 15°C. Plants do not transplant easily. Hand pollination helps fruit bearing. Male pollen from a separate plant should be used. As plants are probably self sterile 2 plants from different sources should be grown together. Plants can be grown from cuttings of the vine or root. Plants can also be grown by layering. In warm climates plants need to be pruned back heavily.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Plants are fast growing. In central China plants flower in April and May and fruit in June to August.

NOTES

There are about 4-5 Akebia species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

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