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Solanum scabrum - Mill.

Common Name	Garden Huckleberry
Family	Solanaceae
Synonyms	S. intrusum. S. melanocerasum. All. S. scabrum.
Known Hazards	There is a lot of disagreement over whether or not the leaves or fruit of this plant are poisonous. Views vary from relatively poisonous to perfectly safe to eat. The plant is cultivated as a food crop, both for its fruit and its leaves, in some parts of the world and it is probably true to say that toxicity can vary considerably according to where the plant is grown and the cultivar that is being grown[4, 7, 10, 13, 65, 76]. The unripe fruit contains the highest concentration of toxins[65].
Habitats	Not known in the wild.
Range	A form of S. nigrum derived in cultivation.
Edibility Rating	
Medicinal Rating	
Care	4



http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Marco_Schmidt



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Summary

Physical Characteristics



Solanum scabrum is a ANNUAL growing to 0.6 m (2ft) by 0.3 m (1ft in). It is hardy to zone (UK) 6. It is in flower from Jul to September, and the seeds ripen from Aug to October. The flowers are hermaphrodite (have both male and female organs) and are pollinated by Insects.

USDA hardiness zone : 5-9

Suitable for: light (sandy), medium (loamy) and heavy (clay) soils and prefers well-drained soil. Suitable pH: acid, neutral and basic (alkaline) soils. It cannot grow in the shade. It prefers moist soil.

Habitats

Cultivated Beds;

Edible Uses

Edible Parts: [Fruit](#); [Leaves](#).

Edible Uses:

Fruit - cooked[2, 27, 89, 179]. Used in preserves, jams and pies[183]. A pleasant musky taste[85]. Only the fully ripe fruits should be used, the unripe fruits contain the toxin solanine[65, 173, 183]. Often cooked with some baking soda first in order to remove any bitterness. The fruit contains about 2.5% protein, 0.6% fat, 5.6% carbohydrate, 1.2% ash[179]. The fruit is up to 12mm in diameter[200]. Young leaves and new shoots - raw or cooked as a potherb or added to soups[2, 27, 85, 89, 173, 179, 183]. See notes at the top of the page regarding possible toxicity.

Medicinal Uses

Plants For A Future can not take any responsibility for any adverse effects from the use of plants. Always seek advice from a professional before using a plant medicinally.

[Antiperiodic](#); [Antiphlogistic](#); [Diaphoretic](#); [Diuretic](#); [Febrifuge](#); [Narcotic](#); [Purgative](#).

The whole plant is antiperiodic, antiphlogistic, diaphoretic, diuretic, emollient, febrifuge, narcotic, purgative and sedative[4, 21, 145, 147, 192, 218]. It is harvested in the autumn when both flowers and fruit are upon the plant, and is dried for later use[4]. Use with caution[21], see notes above on toxicity. The leaves, stems and roots are used in the treatment of cancerous sores, leucoderma and wounds[218]. Extracts of the plant are analgesic, antispasmodic, anti-inflammatory and vasodilator[218]. The plant has been used in the manufacture of locally analgesic ointments and the juice of the fruit has been used as an analgesic for toothaches[7].

Other Uses

None known

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Cultivation details

Succeeds in most soils[1]. Dislikes shade[1]. Caterpillars and slugs are particularly fond of this plant and can totally destroy it[K]. This is a cultivated form of *S. nigrum*, grown for its edible fruit. There is at least one named form[183]. See notes about possible toxicity at the top of this page. There is some disagreement among taxonomists as to the correct name of this plant. It is also listed as *S. melanocerasum*[200]. Grows well with clover[18]. Does not grow well with wormwood or white mustard and, when these plants are growing Closely related to *S. nigrum*, they increase its content of toxic alkaloids[18].

Propagation

Seed - sow spring in situ. The seed can also be sown in a greenhouse during the spring if required since this will normally produce larger crops of fruit. Prick out the seedlings into individual pots when they are large enough to handle and plant out in late spring.

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Expert comment

Author

Mill.

Botanical References

200

Links / References

[K] **Ken Fern** Notes from observations, tasting etc at Plants For A Future and on field trips.

[1]**F. Chittendon.** RHS Dictionary of Plants plus Supplement. 1956

Comprehensive listing of species and how to grow them. Somewhat outdated, it has been replaced in 1992 by a new dictionary (see [200]).

[2]**Hedrick. U. P.** Sturtevant's Edible Plants of the World.

Lots of entries, quite a lot of information in most entries and references.

[4]**Grieve.** A Modern Herbal.

Not so modern (1930's?) but lots of information, mainly temperate plants.

[7]**Chiej. R.** Encyclopaedia of Medicinal Plants.

Covers plants growing in Europe. Also gives other interesting information on the plants. Good photographs.

[18]**Philbrick H. and Gregg R. B.** Companion Plants.

Details of beneficial and antagonistic relationships between neighbouring plants.

[21]**Lust. J.** The Herb Book.

Lots of information tightly crammed into a fairly small book.

[27]**Vilmorin. A.** The Vegetable Garden.

A reprint of a nineteenth century classic, giving details of vegetable varieties. Not really that informative though.

[65]**Frohne. D. and Pfänder. J.** A Colour Atlas of Poisonous Plants.

Brilliant. Goes into technical details but in a very readable way. The best work on the subject that I've come across so far.

[85]**Harrington. H. D.** Edible Native Plants of the Rocky Mountains.

A superb book. Very readable, it gives the results of the authors experiments with native edible plants.

[89]**Polunin. O. and Huxley. A.** Flowers of the Mediterranean.

A very readable pocket flora that is well illustrated. Gives some information on plant uses.

[145]**Singh. Dr. G. and Kachroo. Prof. Dr. P.** Forest Flora of Srinagar.

A good flora of the western Himalayas but poorly illustrated. Some information on plant uses.

[147]? **A Barefoot Doctors Manual.**

A very readable herbal from China, combining some modern methods with traditional Chinese methods.

[173]**Crowe. A.** Native Edible Plants of New Zealand.

A very well written and illustrated book based on the authors own experiments with living on a native diet.

[179]**Reid. B. E.** Famine Foods of the Chiu-Huang Pen-ts'ao.

A translation of an ancient Chinese book on edible wild foods. Fascinating.

[183]**Facciola. S.** Cornucopia - A Source Book of Edible Plants.

Excellent. Contains a very wide range of conventional and unconventional food plants (including tropical) and where they can be obtained (mainly N. American nurseries but also research institutes and a lot of other nurseries from around the world).

[192]**Emboden. W.** Narcotic Plants

A lot of details about the history, chemistry and use of narcotic plants, including hallucinogens, stimulants, inebriants and hypnotics.

[200]**Huxley. A.** The New RHS Dictionary of Gardening. 1992.

Excellent and very comprehensive, though it contains a number of silly mistakes. Readable yet also very detailed.

[218]**Duke. J. A. and Ayensu. E. S.** Medicinal Plants of China

Details of over 1,200 medicinal plants of China and brief details of their uses. Often includes an analysis, or at least a list of constituents. Heavy going if you are not into the subject.

Readers comment

Elizabeth H.

Fri Nov 9 2007

Solanum scabrum and *Solanum melanocerasum* (not *melanoceram*), as I know, are the same plant species and the English common name garden huckleberry for this plant is false, because the huckleberries belong to another family, *Vaccinium*

Elizabeth H.

ade Tue Sep 21 14:14:10 2004

Solanum scabrum is not the same plant as the garden huckleberry, *Solanum melanoceram* although closely related. Its common name is African nightshade

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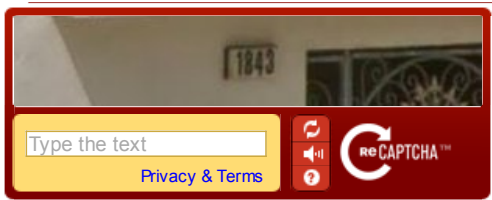
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