

MEDICINAL USES

The tea is pleasant and refreshing, and when used in high quantities has a good diuretic effect, and causes an increase in bile production and transpiration. It detoxifies the body and helps remove dead disease organisms and toxins from the body (cleans the blood). It is a mild sedative and therefore good for reducing stress and helping ensure good sleep.

When people are sick it is important that they take enough fluid and Roselle tea is a good way of ensuring sick people drink enough. The tea can also be made from Roselle mixed with Lemon Grass for added flavour and medicinal benefit.



ROSELLE

Hibiscus sabdariffa



Roselle is a native of Sudan and West Africa. It is a bushy plant, growing to about 1 metre. It grows well in hot conditions, and will tolerate relatively poor soil conditions.

Roselle is grown mainly for its red acid succulent calyces that can be made into a drink or to make jams or jellies. The red colouring makes it a popular ingredient of commercial herbal teas. In West Africa the calyces are used for thickening soups. In some places its leaves are also used as a vegetable and its stem has a fibre that is sometimes used for domestic purposes. The seeds contain an oil, which is good as a lubricant fuel, and used for making soap.

CULTIVATION

Roselle is normally grown for home consumption. It is often grown along footpaths, round the edge of fields, or intercropped with other crops. It can also be grown as a pure stand crop. It is grown from seed. The seeds germinate easily so can be planted direct. The spacing is usually 4 x 3 feet (about 1 metre). Thin the plants when they germinate to this spacing so that they can expand and produce better yields. It grows well in full sunlight and withstands drought quite well. It grows in a wide range of soil, though yields are greatly influenced by soil fertility.

The fruits are picked while tender, plump and fleshy, 15-20 days after flowering. The calyx is normally removed from

the fruit by hand. Roselle is easily sun dried by small-scale farmers.

Calyces are harvested before the seeds mature. To get good seed, harvest the calyces and leave the seed pods on the plant until they are mature. However, leaving the plants to go to seed means that the plants age, so chose only a few plants for producing seeds.

Once roselle is established in a garden, it often seeds itself and these seeds germinate. These seedlings are easy to transplant to where they are needed as they have strong roots.

USING ROSELLE

Roselle calyces can be used either fresh or dried. Add a handful of the calyces to boiling water and boil for a couple of minutes. Adjust the amount used according to taste. The tea is sour, and some like it as it is. Most people will prefer to add sugar or honey to sweeten the drink. Roselle can be drunk as a hot tea, or cooled and drunk as a refreshing cold drink.

