

CRANBERRY HIBISCUS

False Roselle

Hibiscus acetosella

Malvaceae Mallow

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

Cranberry Hibiscus, as well as its sister species, Roselle (*H. sabdariffa*), and Kenaf (*H. cannabinus*) are of African origin. It is believed to be a hybrid of African wild hibiscus species. Cranberry Hibiscus is now known only as a cultivated plant. This species tends to escape from gardens and it may be found growing wild along roadsides and in waste places in the vicinity of plantings.

Uses

The color and pleasing, tangy taste of the leaves make them a great addition to salads or stir-fries. The somewhat fleshy leaves and young shoots may be cooked as a vegetable and eaten with rice. The stem yields a good quality fiber but of low quantity. Kenaf is a better choice for commercial fiber production. The colorful red stems and foliage plus the pink flowers of the pink-flowered variety make this species a desirable choice for ornamental plantings in tropical and subtropical environments. It may be used in temperate gardens as a summer annual, but it is highly susceptible to frost.

Common Names

- French
 - l'hibiscus aux canneberges
- Spanish
 - Cranberry Hibiscus
 - Hibiscus De Hojas Rojas
 - Rosemallow Africano

Cultivation

- Elevation: low to medium elevations
- Rainfall: needs at least 500 mm (20 in) during growth
- Temperature: frost sensitive
- Soil: deep, loose, well-drained soils
- Light: Will grow in full sun, but prefers some shade.

Cranberry Hibiscus is propagated from seeds or from stem cuttings. Seeds may be sown in springtime directly in field environments with well-prepared soil or transplanted as young seedlings from seedbeds to field conditions. The plants need to be widely spaced to accommodate this species' wide-spreading branching habits.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Pick leaves and stems as needed. To collect seed, allow seed pods to dry while still on the plant, then harvest. Pods are easily cracked open, and the seeds can be shaken out. You may want to wear gloves when working with the pods to avoid the irritating hairs covering the stems and pods. Pruning leafy tips from a row of Cranberry Hibiscus plants can provide not only a vegetable source but also result in a trimmed colorful hedge.

Pests and Diseases

Cranberry Hibiscus is resistant to soil-borne nematodes. Plant losses have been attributed to soil pathogens such as *Rhizoctonia solani* and *Sclerotium rolfsii*.

Cooking and Nutrition

The red coloring of the vegetable material is retained well in salads and in stir-fries; however, cooking in water may reduce the colored pigment content. When cooked as a vegetable, it can be combined with pounded peanuts for extra flavor. In contrast to *Roselle* species, the calyx lobes are not eaten from the Cranberry Hibiscus; however, the pink blossoms may be used to make a beverage. Pick about 30 blossoms in the evening after they have folded up. Blend the petals with lime juice and sugar to make a tasty and beautiful drink. The petals add a smooth texture and intense color, more than any special flavor. This type of beverage is popular in Central and South America.

References

[Plants for a Future](#)

[Prota4U](#)

[WikiSpecies](#)