

ANGLED LUFFA

Luffa acutangula

Cucurbitaceae

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Description

Angled Luffa, and its sister species, Smooth Luffa, probably originated in India. Both species now are widely distributed in the tropics. The young fruits are edible raw or cooked. Although both species produce a fibrous skeleton in the mature fruit, Smooth Luffa is the preferred species cultivated for the luffa sponge. Angled Luffa is the preferred species for the edible fruit.

Utilisations

Normally, Angled Luffas are eaten as a green vegetable. In some parts of West Africa a leaf extract of ridged gourd is applied on sores caused by guinea worms to kill the parasite. Leaf sap is also used as an eyewash to cure conjunctivitis.

Noms courants

- anglais
 - Angled Luffa
 - Ridged Loofah
 - Chinese Okra

Culture

- Light: full-sun
- Temperature: frost sensitive
- Soil: well-drained, sandy loams Angled Luffa is well adapted to the warm dry tropics but survive in the wet tropics as well.

Luffas are frost sensitive and do not thrive in temperate regions. Luffas can be planted year round but do best if planted at the beginning of the rainy season. Although the vines can be allowed to trail along the ground in dry regions, it is best to grow them on sturdy fences or trellises to reduce fruit rot. In the hot humid tropics trellising is especially important. Plant in fertile loose soil in hills or on ridges 1.5 m (5 ft) apart.

récolte et production de semences

Fruits are harvested while still green and tender, usually no more than 12-15 cm (4-6 in) long, and before fibers develop. For seed harvest, watch for the stem of the gourd to turn from brown to green. Gourds are ready to harvest if you can hear the seeds rattling around inside when you shake the gourd. You can harvest the gourds a little earlier than that (while they are still a little green) if you have a sunny place to let them dry. To collect seed, simply cut off the top of the gourd and shake out the seed. To process the gourds for sponges, soak the mature fruit for several days in water. If the fruit is still green, you will need to wash the pulp and seeds from the fibrous skeleton and pull off the outer covering. If the fruit is allowed to dry to a brown color on the vine, the soaking simply helps soften the skin, so it can be removed more easily. Sun dry for a day or two, then soak in dilute laundry bleach or hydrogen peroxide to whiten the color, if desired. Sun dry again.

Ravageurs et maladies

Angled Luffa is relatively disease free although young fruits may be susceptible to fruit rot on the vine in the humid tropics caused by a Mucor mold species. Angled Luffa is susceptible to several nematode species. Insect pests common to gourd family plants reported for luffas include squash bugs, cucumber beetles, the red pumpkin beetle, and Dacus fruit flies.

Cuisine et nutrition

For eating, harvest the young fruits when they reach 12-15 cm (4-6 in) in length or approximately 1/3 to 1/2 of their mature size. Older fruits will contain the fibrous skeleton characteristic of luffa gourds. Raw fruits may be sliced and eaten in salads. Often the fruits are cooked (steamed, boiled or fried) as a vegetable, or added to stews, soups or curries. Leaves may be eaten raw in salads or cooked as a vegetable. Flowers and flower buds may be dipped in batter and sauteed. The seeds of Angled Luffa are usually bitter and may contain poisonous substances. They are not recommended for oil extraction and vegetable curd production.

Références

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