CAIGUA

Cyclanthera pedata Curcurbitaceae

ECHO® FICHE D'INFORMATIONS DE LA PLANTE

Origine

Along with beans and corn, squashes were a principle crop of the Incas, Mayas and Aztecs. This cucurbit is a local variety that is important only in some warm areas of Mexico, the Caribbean, and South America. Squashes are now popular throughout the world though no where are they a major crop.

Utilisations

Caigua is a gourd-like vegetable, 6-15 cm long, flattened on the sides with soft spines. The immature vegetable and its leaves and young shoots are eaten raw and cooked. As a crop, it is well-suited to small farms and gardens.

Noms courants

- castillan
  - Caigua
  - Achocha
  - Pepino de Comer
- anglais
  - Stuffing Cucumber
  - Slipper Gourd
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  - Caihua
  - Achoccha
  - Korila
- quechua
  - Kaywa
  - Achuqcha

Culture

The Caigua plant is easy to cultivate requiring only moderate soil moisture. Once it has gained some height, it shades out any competing weeds. It is relatively cold tolerant and has been grown at elevations as high as 2,000 m. Since it is difficult to stake the abundance of vines, they are best left on the ground with plenty of room to spread or allowed to climb on fences or low roofs.

récolte et production de semences

This plant sets fruit when days become shorter, after the summer solstice. Three months from planting by seed, fruits can be harvested. The harvest can last over a three month period. Many varieties have a hard outer coat when mature and therefore good keeping qualities. The black seeds may be removed from mature fruit and if dried for a week in a well ventilated area, they will store for two years. If the vegetable is not harvested, it will self-seed with new plants growing thickly.

Ravageurs et maladies

Few insects bother this plant.

Cuisine et nutrition

Squashes are generally good sources of Vitamins A and C, iron, potassium and low in sodium. Leaves, young shoots and the surplus male flowers may be lightly steamed. The vegetable should be picked young, before the seeds turn black, and steamed or stir fried. The taste of its raw flesh resembles cucumber but not as crisp. More mature squashes may be stuffed with meats, fish or cheese and baked. The seeds may be roasted as a snack or collected and pressed for oil.

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