

Abelmoschus manihot

Aibika



Abelmoschus manihot is a shrub growing up to 5 metres tall, though when growing at the limits of its range it can become annual in habit. The plant is harvested from the wild for local use as a food, medicine and source of materials. It is often cultivated in the tropics and subtropics, especially in Asia and the Pacific Islands, both as an ornamental and for its edible leaves

Edible Uses

Young leaves - raw or cooked

Sweet and mucilaginous, Young leaves can be used as a lettuce substitute

Young shoots are harvested when about 15cm long

Flower buds - raw or cooked

Medicinal

The bark is said to be emmenagogue. A paste of the bark is used to treat wounds and cuts, with new paste being applied every 2 - 3 days for about 3 weeks.

In Nepal the root juice is warmed and applied to sprains.

The juice of the flowers is used to treat chronic bronchitis and toothache

Other Uses

The root of this plant is used by the Japanese as a size for their handmade papers, which are prepared from the inner bark of *Edgeworthia gardneri* and several varieties of the paper mulberry (*Broussonetya papyrifera*). The root is macerated in water and added to the paper pulp. The mucilage is obtained from the roots of this plant as follows:- Wash off the dirt, soak in fresh water for some hours, and crush them to pieces. The substance thus prepared should then be put in a linen bag and soaked again in water. When the material gets thoroughly soft, the juice comes out of the bag by manipulating in the vat in which pulp has been previously mixed to receive the paste. The bag should be squeezed now and then, as the mucilage does not come out by itself. The paper maker can judge whether sufficient mucilage is in the water or not by its glutinous consistency. This is considered the best mucilaginous plant and is extensively used in Japan.



An oil is obtained from the seeds.

An extract of the flowers is used as an ingredient in commercial cosmetic preparations as a skin conditioner.

An extract of the flowering stems is used as an ingredient in commercial cosmetic preparations as a humectant, skin conditioner and protector.

An extract of the roots is used as an ingredient in commercial cosmetic preparations as a humectant and skin conditioner.