



Spider plant/Nyevhe/Ulude

Cats Whiskers/Nyevhe/Ulude/Bangarara grows in most parts of Zimbabwe. The plant is a popular vegetable in many African countries. The plant is an erect, heavily branched annual with hairy sticky stems. It grows 0.5-1.5m in height and has white flowers with a pink colour. Terminal flowers produce seed pods.

Land races

There are four land races distinguished by stem and leaf petiole colour

1. Green stem, green leaf petiole colour
2. Green stem, purple leaf petiole colour
3. Purple stem, green leaf petiole colour
4. Purple stem, purple leaf petiole colour

N.B Green stem and leaf coloured petiole landraces taste better than purple coloured landraces which are slightly bitter.

Uses: Plant is consumed as fresh or dried (mufushwa) depending on seasonal availability. In some African countries it is used for medicinal purposes. Botswana and South Africa are potential export markets

Nutritional Value

Nyevhe is rich in vitamin A, B, C and also has high levels of magnesium, calcium and iron. The characteristic bitter taste is due to volatile oils and is more pronounced in water stressed and old plants.

Production requirements

Climate: Warm to hot weather is ideal for production. At temperatures below 15°C growth is hampered. Should be planted at the onset of the rainy season so that adequate moisture is available to the plant. Crop does not tolerate water logging conditions.

Soils: Sandy and clay loams with good drainage are ideal

Fertilisation: Research has shown that plants respond well to organic as well as chemical fertilizers.

Topdressing: 100kg/ha Ammonium nitrate applied 3-4 weeks after emergence at a rate of 5g/plant

Spacing: 30-50cm between rows and 15-20cm inrow

Planting time

In the Highveld it can be grown from August to December while in the Lowveld production can continue up to May. Emergence occurs 6 to 8 days from sowing.

Hints for a successful crop establishment

- Direct seeding is best and should be done in rows after applying manure or fertilizer
- Drill and cover seed lightly with soil
- Seed rate should be high to cater for the erratic rate of emergence
- Transplanting seedlings from speedling trays is possible but the plants will flower early

Harvesting

Leaves are ready for harvesting 3 to 4 weeks from emergence

