

Did You Know?



Hibiscus, *Hibiscus sabdariffa*

- This hibiscus, unlike the large flowered tropical hibiscus, is valued for its edible red calyx and as a fiber plant in tropical regions.
- Common names include roselle, Indian sorrel, Florida cranberry, Jamaica dogwood, Jamaica tea, rosella hemp (referring to the fiber from the plant), among others.
- This versatile plant has edible seeds, leaves and flower calyces (outer red whorl beneath the flowers) and stems that produce rosella hemp which is a fiber used to make rope and burlap in tropical regions around the world.
- The fresh and dried calyces are steeped in warm or cold water to make a tea beverage and are used to make jelly, sauces, soups, salads and desserts like pies and ice cream.
- Fresh calyces are used similarly to cranberries to make jelly, fruit salads, wine and desserts.
- Calyces are also used to color syrups, liqueurs and West Indian Rum.
- The leaves can be eaten like a spicy green.
- There are medicinal use studies investigating the antihypertensive, anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial properties and more.
- *H. sabdariffa* is frost tender, hardy in zones 8-11. The flowers, which are 3-4 inches in diameter, white or pale yellow with a dark center, are produced on plants with lobed leaves that can grow 7-8' tall. The plant's red stems are attractive in the garden as well.
- This hibiscus requires full sun and short days, 12 or more hours of darkness, for abundant flowering. It typically blooms in early fall. Warmer climates are ideal due to the longer growing season.
- About 10 days after the flower falls off harvest the calyces. Rinse and thoroughly dry for storage, use fresh or freeze.
- While native to Africa, roselle spread to Asia and the West Indie in the 16th and early 17th centuries. It is now used in cultures around the world.

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