

*Hibiscus manihot*

[Synonyms : *Abelmoschus caillei*, *Abelmoschus manihot*, *Abelmoschus manihot* var. *manihot*, *Abelmoschus manihot* var. *megaspermus*, *Abelmoschus manihot* forma *platidactylis*, *Abelmoschus manihot* var. *timorensis*, *Abelmoschus platidactylus*, *Abelmoschus pseudomanihot*, *Hibiscus japonicus*, *Hibiscus papyriferus*]

**EDIBLE HIBISCUS** is a perennial (sometimes grown as an annual). Native from eastern Asia to south-eastern Asia and northern Australia, it has maroon-based, white to yellow flowers.

It is also known as Aibika, *Dahk pool* (Korean), *Gédi* (German), *Gulöga* (Swedish), Hibiscus root, Hibiscus spinach, *Hibiscuswurzel* (German), *Hoang chou k'oei* (Chinese-Cantonese), *Huang kui* (Chinese), *Huang shu kui* (Chinese), *Ketmie à feuilles comestibles* (French), *Ketmie épinard d'Australie* (French), *Lagikuway* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Po fai* (Thai), *Ranbhindi* (Gujarati), Sunset hibiscus, Sunset muskmallow, *Tororo aoi* (Japanese), *Van lasun* (Nepalese), and Yellow hibiscus.

*Manihot* is derived from the genus name *Manihot* meaning 'like cassava or tapioca (*Manihot esculenta*)'.

Locally the young leaves and the flower buds are eaten raw or cooked as a vegetable – particularly in south-eastern Asia where the plant is also viewed as a source of fibre (used for jute-like *Corchorus capsularis* cordage).

Edible hibiscus is sometimes grown in Asia as an ornamental plant. It was probably first domesticated in New Guinea (the huge island today divided into Papua New Guinea and in the west, the Indonesian state of Irian Jaya).

Research carried out by the Chinese in the closing decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has shown that the seed oil of edible hibiscus is rich in Vitamin E. As a result plans were being considered for cultivating the plant in order to produce the seed oil on a commercial scale for use by the cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries.

Medicinally, records indicate that it has been used locally in internal treatments for some cancers, and for treating catarrh and stomach disorders. It has also been applied externally on sores, boils and sprains. The bark has been used in remedies for some period problems.