ROSA DE JAMAICA (HIBISCUS SABDARIFFA)

Origin  Rosa de Jamaica is native from India to Malaysia, where it is still commonly cultivated. It was also brought to Africa at a very early date. It has been widely distributed in the Tropics and Subtropics of both hemispheres and in many areas of the West Indies and Central America.

Description  Rosa de Jamaica is an annual, leafy shrub that can grow to be 8 ft. tall. The leaves are alternate and green with reddish veins. The flowers are yellow in color with a rose colored eye and turn pink, wither and fall after one full day. At this time, the red calyx (the fruit) begins to enlarge, and becomes fleshy and crisp. The calyx encloses a velvety capsule which is green when immature and contains the light brown seeds. The capsule turns brown and splits open when mature. The red calyx is what is harvested and closely resembles the cranberry in flavor.

Planting  The ideal time to plant is at the beginning of the rainy season or the first few weeks in June. The seeds may be started in nursery beds and transplanted when they are 3-4 inches high or they may be planted directly. When transplanting the plants of thinning out the plants, there should be 1.5 meters between each row and one meter between each plant. Weeding is necessary at first, but after the plants reach 2 ft. tall the weeds will be shaded out. Early pruning will increase branching and development of more flowering shoots.

Harvesting/ Yield  If planted in late May or early June, blooming will occur in September and October and the calyxes will be ready to harvest in November and December. Once the plants finish flowering, it is recommended to wait 20 to 25 days for the calyx to fully mature before harvesting. The fruits or calyx are harvested when full grown but still tender. At this stage, the calyxes easily snap off by hand, but if harvesting is overdue, the stems will have toughened greatly, and clippers may make the job easier. Calyx production per plant will range from 1.5 to 3 pounds of fresh calyxes.

    Leave some calyxes on the plants and allow the seeds to fully mature. Once they are mature, cut down the entire plant, stack the plants and let them dry for a few days. Afterward, thresh the plants, as you would beans, in order to retrieve the seeds for planting in the following year. Make sure not to wait too long, because the seed pods will dry and split open and all of the seeds will fall out.

Food Value  The calyxes are high in calcium, niacin, riboflavin and iron.

Food Value per 100g of Calyx

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutrient</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
<td>11.4g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fat</td>
<td>2.61g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiber</td>
<td>12g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calcium</td>
<td>1263mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phosphorus</td>
<td>273.2mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron</td>
<td>8.98mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carotene</td>
<td>0.029mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thiamine</td>
<td>0.117mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riboflavin</td>
<td>0.277mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niacin</td>
<td>3.765mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>6.7mg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Medicinal Properties
- High in Vitamin C
- Helps cure hangovers
- Helps aid the digestive system
- Helps lower cholesterol
- Aids in problems with insomnia
- It is a diuretic which helps with the kidneys and problems with the urinary tract

Recipes

In order to prepare the calyxes for eating, make an incision at the base of the calyx, and remove the seed capsule. You can use the fresh calyxes in recipes or you can dry the calyxes first. If you want to dry them, leave the calyxes spread out on a screen, in the shade, for 6-10 days.

Jam

To every cup of fresh Rosa de Jamaica, add a ¼ cup of water. If you are using dried Rosa de Jamaica, boil the dry calyxes first. Add as much sugar as you desire. Allow it to boil until it thickens. Once it cools, it will thicken even more. Rosa de Jamaica is very high in pectin which makes it excellent for making jam.

Drinks

Some good suggestions of flavors to add to hot Rosa de Jamaica tea or iced tea are ginger, white pepper, all spice, and cinnamon. To make the tea, just pour boiling water over the Rosa de Jamaica, sugar, and whatever you choose to add to the tea and let it sit for an extended period of time. The Rosa de Jamaica ginger iced tea is great with rum and is a very popular drink in some countries. You can also make wine from the Rosa de Jamaica. Follow the basic directions for making wine but you will have better results with the dry calyxes. Use 1 pound of dried Rosa de Jamaica to 5 gallons of water. You can also add cinnamon, ginger or white pepper when making the wine, as well.

Rosa de Jamaica Candy

Boil the Rosa de Jamaica until the calyxes soften slightly. Remove from the water and strain as much water out as possible. Heat together ¼ cup of water with 3 pounds of sugar. Once a honey has been formed add the softened calyxes. Boil until mixture is very thick. Once it has thickened, lay mixture out on a flat surface. Allow to cool a bit, then cut into squares and allow to completely cool.

Rosa de Jamaica Bread

2 cups flour
1 cup sugar
1 ½ teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
Mix the four dry ingredients together and then add:
1 egg
2 tablespoons oil
¾ orange juice
Vanilla
Mix well, then chop lightly and add:
1 ½ cup Rosa de Jamaica
½ walnuts (optional)
Mix together lightly and put in oven to bake