

FGCU Food Forest

Plant Database

Roselle (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*)

Origin: India to Malaysia

Description: It is an annual or

subshrub, growing to 7–8 ft tall. The leaves are deeply three- to five-lobed, 3–6 in long, arranged alternately on the stems. At the bottom of each flower, enclosing the

bright red cup-like structure called a calyx that is edible.

Uses: Food and medicinal

Harvest: November and December

Flower: Flowers, borne singly in the leaf axils, are up to 5 in wide, yellow or buff with a rose or maroon eye,

end of the day.

Tolerance: Roselle is very sensitive to frost. It succeeds best in tropical and subtropical regions from sea-level up to 3,000 ft with a rainfall of about 72 in during its growing season. While

produced well over many years in the



General Description: Roselle is a robust many-branched shrub-like annual that gets 4-7 ft (1.2-2.1 m) tall and almost as broad. The dark green leaves are about 6 in (15 cm) across and deeply dissected into 5 narrow lobes. The stems, branches, leaf veins, and petioles (leaf stems) are reddish purple. The hibiscus-like flowers, appearing in October, are yellow and about 3 in (7.6 cm) across. At

the bottom of each flower, enclosing the bases of the five petals, is a fleshy bright red cup-like structure called a calyx, The calyx is about 1 in (2.5 cm) in diameter. The calyces of roselle are used to make juices, sauces, jellies, wines and pies.

- **Native Origin:** Roselle is native from India to Malaysia, where it is commonly cultivated, and must have been carried at an early date to Africa.
- **General History:** The Flemish botanist, M. de L'Obel, published his observations of the plant in 1576, and the edibility of the leaves was recorded in Java in 1687. Seeds are said to have been brought to the New World by African slaves. Roselle was grown in Brazil in the 17th Century and in Jamaica in 1707. Roselle became and remained a common home garden crop throughout southern and central Florida until after World War II when this area began to develop rapidly and home gardening and preserving declined. Mrs. Edith Trebell of Estero, Florida, was one of the last remaining suppliers of roselle jelly. Today, roselle is attracting the attention of food and beverage manufacturers and pharmaceutical concerns who feel it may have exploitable possibilities as a natural food product and as a colorant to replace some synthetic dyes.
- **Distribution:** It has been widely distributed in the Tropics and Subtropics of both hemispheres, and in many areas of the West Indies and Central America has become naturalized.
- **Season of Harvest:** Blooming will occur in September and October and calyces will be ready to harvest in November and December. Harvesting causes latent buds to develop and extends the flowering life of the plant to late February. When the fruit is not gathered but left to mature, the plants will die in January.
- **Uses:** Roselle fruits are best prepared for use by washing, then making an incision around the tough base of the calyx below the bracts to free and remove it with the seed capsule attached. The calyces are then ready for immediate use. They may be merely chopped and added to fruit salads. For making a finer-textured sauce or juice, syrup, jam, marmalade, relish, chutney or jelly, the calyces may be first chopped in a wooden bowl or passed through a meat grinder. Or the calyces, after cooking, may be pressed through a sieve. Some cooks steam the roselle with a little water until soft before adding the sugar, then boil for 15 minutes. Nutritionists have found roselle calyces as sold in Central American markets to be high in calcium, niacin, riboflavin and iron. In India, Africa and Mexico, all above-ground parts of the roselle plant are valued in native medicine. Infusions of the leaves or calyces are regarded as diuretic, cholerectic, febrifugal and hypotensive, decreasing the viscosity of the blood and stimulating intestinal peristalsis. Pharmacognosists in Senegal recommend roselle extract for lowering blood pressure. In 1962, Sharaf confirmed the hypotensive activity of the calyces and found them antispasmodic, anthelmintic and antibacterial as well. In 1964, the aqueous extract was found effective against *Ascaris gallinarum* in poultry. The heated leaves are applied to cracks in the feet and on boils and ulcers to speed maturation. A lotion made from leaves is used on sores and wounds.

Roselle	
Scientific Classification	
Kingdom:	Plantae

(unranked): Angiosperms

(unranked): Eudicots

(unranked): Rosids

Order: Malvales

Family: Malvaceae

Genus: *Hibiscus*

Species: ***H. sabdariffa***

Sources

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roselle_\(plant\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roselle_(plant))

<https://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/morton/roselle.html#Climate>

<http://mobile.floridata.com/Plants/Malvaceae/Hibiscus%20sabdarriffa/498>

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