



Hibiscus acetosella 'Cranberry Hibiscus'

Cranberry Hibiscus ((a.k.a False roselle, African rosemallow – *Hibiscus acetosella*) is a striking and colorful plant with red leaves that resemble a maple leaf. It can be grown as a border or hedge plant – its dramatic purple leaves contrasting nicely with plants that have paler green leaves.

Plant Highlights

- Tasty slightly sour or pleasantly tart young leaves Edible flowers
- Flowers are used to make teas or other drinks
- Looks great in the landscape

It does best in full sun to light shade and has rose pink hollyhock-like flowers that open for a few hours at midday mostly in the fall. It tends to grow so tall it straggles all over the place because its slender branches bend right over from the weight of its leaves. Prune it when it is young by pinching out the growing tips to encourage it to form a dense bush. Cut it to the base after it has finished blooming and it will usually grow a second year. If kept well pruned, it makes a lovely hedge or shrub.

The calyx of cranberry hibiscus is not fleshy and is not eaten.

The hibiscus plant, in general, is accredited as a rich source of vitamin C. This is especially beneficial to add to your winter days when you may need more of that vitamin C boost. Though not as potent, hibiscus also contains vitamin B-3 which is also called niacin, and B-2, or riboflavin. The B vitamins are known to give you more energy throughout the day, another added benefit to cranberry hibiscus.

Uses: In Central America the flowers are blended with ice, sugar, lemon or lime juice and water to make a delicious, purple lemonade. The leaves are pleasantly tart and can be eaten in salads and stir fries. They retain their red color even after cooking. Because the leaves are a bit mucilaginous (slimy), they are best cooked in smallish quantities and cooked only for a short time.

Hibiscus Syrup Recipe: Collect about thirty blossoms at dusk after they have folded. The petals add a bright red color rather than any special flavor. Bring 6 cups of water to a boil and remove from heat. Add 4 oz. dried hibiscus flowers and allow to steep, covered. When cool, add sugar to taste, and ½ cup fresh squeezed lime or lemon juice. Serve chilled.

Zones: 8-11 Mature Height/Spread: 4-6 (10) feet

Mature Form: Wild & rangy, a dense bush if well pruned

Growth Rate: Rapid

Sun Exposure: Full Sun

Soil Requirements: 6.1 to 6.5 (mildly acidic)

Soil Type: All kinds of soil as long as it is well-drained

Water: Fairly drought tolerant

Leaves: Burgundy to bronze-green

Flower Color: Pink

Bloom Time: Late Fall/Early Winter

Propagation: Cuttings or seed. Seeds can be dried on plants and collected (wear gloves to protect hands when handling seeds)

Pests/Diseases: It is nematode and insect resistant