



Smallanthus sonchifolius 'Yacón'

Yacon is one of the most extraordinary plants of the Andes. This spectacular plant is related to the sunflower & grows very similarly. It is also called "Pear of the Earth" because its tubers are a delicious flavor that resembles a blend of watermelon, apple, & pear. It is very juicy and crisp and can be eaten raw or cooked. We had the chance to try some this last fall we were blown away by their flavor. Highly recommended, fun to grow for a fall harvest.

Plant Highlights

- Tuber that tastes like a fruit
- Eat Raw or Cooked
- Fall Harvest

Yacon is a perennial herb growing 1.5 to 3 m tall with dark green celery-like leaves. The plant produces both male and female daisy-like yellow to orange flowers that are pollinated by insects. Each plant forms an underground clump of 4 to 20 fleshy large tuberous roots. Each weighs, on average, about 500 g. The skin of the tuber when fresh is a tan to a light yellow in color but quickly turns dark brown to dark purple when exposed to air. Yacon is a member of the sunflower family and while it grows in the warm, temperate valleys of the Andes, it can be found at altitudes up to 3200 meters. It is native to the lower Andes regions and cloud forests of South America and can be found in Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Colombia. It is now widely cultivated for its edible roots throughout Andean South America and has been exported into Japan, Taiwan, New Zealand, the Czech Republic, and even the United States as a novel edible root crop.

Fresh yacon tubers are crisp and juicy with a delicate flavor reminiscent of apple or melon and a surprising sweetness that increases with storage. They are usually eaten raw, (fresh or sun-dried) or steamed, baked, roasted, or juiced into syrup. In the Peruvian Andes where yacon production is flourishing, one can find yacon processed into almost anything in the local markets. . . from pancake syrup, to soft drinks, jam, breakfast cereals, and pudding.

Traditional Preparation: The tubers are simply just eaten like a fruit or they are juiced and boiled down to a syrup. The leaves are traditionally prepared as a decoction and taken in dosages of 1 cup two to three times daily to lower blood sugar.

Soil: Moist well drained

Sun: Prefers Full Sun

Cold: Will freeze in the winter, but should come back from the stump.

Propagation: From the rhizome pieces or smaller tubers.

Pests: None known.

Height: 4-6 ft

Zones: 7-11