



AVRDC - The World Vegetable Center

Fact Sheet

Saving Seeds of Malabar Spinach

Production

Malabar spinach (*Basella* spp.), also known as Ceylon spinach and Indian spinach, is a climbing perennial plant. The vine is succulent with tender leaves.

Malabar spinach grows well in hot, humid climates and is adaptable to most soils. Trellised plants work best from the point of view of flower induction, fruit harvesting and crop management (Fig. 1). Short days (13 hours or less) are required for flowering.



Fig. 1. Malabar spinach growing on a trellis

Selection

Select seed from healthy, vigorous growing plants with uniform plant habit.

Isolation

It appears to be a self-pollinated species judging from the characteristics of its flowers and performance at AVRDC.

Harvesting

Harvest mature fruits with dark purple color (Fig. 2). The vines sometimes turn brown or yellow at this stage. Fruits may be harvested singly or in clusters.



Fig. 2. Flowers and mature fruits

Processing

Two methods may be used. One option is to remove the seed coats by washing with tap water, followed by drying of seeds in the sun.

The alternative method is to dry the fruits with their seed coats attached. Fruits are juicy and if drying is incomplete the seeds turn bad. Seeds are subsequently threshed, cleaned by winnowing, and later dried more completely in the sun.

Storage

Dried seeds can be safely stored for at least three years. Place seeds in jars, manila envelopes, cloth or mesh bags, plastic containers, or foil envelopes. The best containers are air-tight, such as a sealed glass jar, metal can, or foil envelope. Protect seed from sunlight.

Store seeds in a cool (below 15 °C is ideal), dry location. Place the seeds in a refrigerator for long-term storage. For short-term storage, keep the seeds in a cool, shady and dry place.

References

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- Rashid, M.A. and D.P. Singh. 2000. A manual of seed production in Bangladesh. AVRDC-USAID-Bangladesh Project. Joydebpur, Gazipur, Bangladesh.