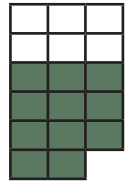


Aloe vera

(*A. barbadensis*)

Aloaceae



Unknown, may be Horn of Africa and South West Arabia

Am: *Eret*

Eng: *Aloe, Aloe vera, Barbados Aloe, Curacao Aloe*

Ecology

One of the centres of diversities for this species is Ethiopia. It is drought tolerant and in Ethiopia, it occurs in Dry and Moist Bereha and Kolla, Weyna-Dega agroclimatic zones, 700—2,300 m.

Uses

Drink (juice), medicine (sap), skin ointment (sap), cosmetic (sap).

Description

More or less succulent shrubby perennial with very short stem. **STEM:** often very short stem. **ROOTS:** taproot 5 – 10 cm long with many secondary roots in the upper soil horizon, freely suckering and forming dense groups, fleshy. **LEAVES:** about 16, erect to slightly spreading, narrowly triangular, 40 – 50 cm x 6-7 cm, upper surface gray-green to pale green with few to many spots, lower surface generally lighter, margin with pale deltoid pale teeth of 2 mm. **FLOWER:** pseudo-lateral inflorescence, bisexual, simple or sparsely branched, 60 – 100 cm tall, racemes 30 – 40 cm x 5-6 cm, densely flowered; flower with yellow, red or orange perianth, stiffly pendulous, anthers and stigma excreted, sepals 6, usually connate into a tube, sometimes outer three free, fleshy, apices sub-acute to obtuse; stamens 6, in 2 rows of

3; ovary superior, 3-locular, style filiform; longer than stamens, stigma small. **FRUIT:** a loculicidal capsule, many seeded; Seeds elongate and ovoid, grey or black, arillate.

Propagation

Vegetatively through suckers, or by seed. Vegetative propagation is preferred. Suckers can be cut from the mother plant when they become 15 – 20 cm long.

Management

Juice can be extracted 2 – 3 years after planting; 6 – 12 months for production of jel. Early removal of suckers encourages large leaves. Mulching, shading and furrow cultivation also practised. Transplant suckers prefer 0.5 m spacing between and within rows. Aloe juice is obtained by cutting the leaves transversally close to the stems and positioning them in such a way that the juice drains into container.

Remarks

In various countries, the fresh yellow leaf juice is used as laxative or purgative and refrigerant. It is used to treat burns, wounds, abrasions, skin diseases, irritations and alopecia. Leaf sap is applied externally to treat pimples, blackheads or cuts. It is used as to wash hair to promote hair growth and as a cosmetic to improve the complexion and smoothen the skin. Suitable for arid regions of Ethiopia.

Photo: Tadesse Wolde Mariam

