



Corchorus olitorius

Family name: **Malvaceae**Common name: **Malvaceae**Local name: (الخدرة, الملوخية) **Khodra, Malokhia**

Wild and cultivated



Role in Biodiversity

This plant provides food not only for humans but also acts as a habitat and food for beneficial insects.



Environment and Growing

Corchorus olitorius grows in tropical and subtropical regions throughout the world in grey and deep alluvial soils. It grows best in silt deposited in the wake of annual floods.

Growth requirements:

- Daily temperature range of 22–35°C.
- Annual rainfall of 1000–2000 mm.
- Optimum pH is 6.6–7.0.



Reproduction and Communication

Flowers are bisexual and start to appear about a month after planting and continue for 1–2 months, depending on type and conditions. The flowers are usually self-pollinated, but cross-pollination of up to 10% occurs.



Life span

Three to four months after cultivation, the fruits are ripe, the leaves drop and the plant dies.



Size

Corchorus olitorius can grow up to 4 m high.



Parts



Stems are erect, either deep green or deep red, hairless, and mucilaginous.

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The plant has a taproot system.



Leaves are light green, ovate-lanceolate, 3–5 veined, serrated with a tapering end, and highly mucilaginous.



Flowers are yellow with sharply pointed sepals.



Fruits are cylindrical and elongated pods, narrow, 10-ribbed and characterized by prominent ridges and furrows with a short beak-like tip.



Seeds are small and black with a greenish tinge.

INTRODUCTION

Herb or small shrub

Corchorus olitorius, jute, is an annual herb or short-lived perennial characterized by a well-branched stem, green mucilaginous leaves, and enlarged straight or curved, dehiscent and many seeded fruits. It has been cultivated from ancient times in Africa and the Indian subcontinent. The plant was grown mainly for its leaves, which were used as a vegetable or medicine and later for production of bast fibres as the outer stem walls are soft and flexible and can be used in textiles and ropemaking. In tropical Africa it is reported as a wild or cultivated vegetable.

In Sudan, *Corchorus olitorius* is an indigenous wild as well as cultivated plant. It is the most consumed leafy vegetables known as *Khodra* in all of Sudan. In modern agriculture, *Khodra* is grown in small areas scattered in agricultural projects and valley plains throughout the year, especially in the fall and summer. The cultivated *Khodra* is of high economic and cultural value. It is cooked as fresh or dried, which helps to make it available on the Sudanese table in times of scarcity, especially in winter.

LIVELIHOODS / CULTURE

Cultivation

Land preparation: This plant is usually grown in a basin or *ahwad* prepared as 2 x 2 meters or as desired. In these *ahwad* the soil is well mixed, turned, and levelled.

Seed sowing: Seeds are scatter densely and evenly over the entire area of the basin and sprayed with water so that the seeds do not drift away and pile up in one corner of the basin.

Watering: After about four or five days of germination the plant is watered lightly because the plant is still weak and too much water may cause the plant to be washed away from the soil. It is important to be very careful in this initial stage of the irrigation process. Watering should be continuous and regular throughout the cultivation period. The soil should not be left dry or over-watered.

Weeding: This is an important step at the beginning of growth. Weeds are removed manually.

Harvesting: The first harvest is approximately one to one and a half months after planting, depending on the care, conditions and environment surrounding the plant. The second harvest is after a month from the first harvest. And a third one could be done after another month if the plant is healthy and still growing well. Harvesting is by cutting the stem approximately 15 cm from the ground surface, and in this case the plant will sprout again, or, by cutting the large leaves directly from the stem as after 3 weeks to a month, the leaves will grow again. In rare cases harvesting is done by removing the entire plant with the roots.

Storing and distribution: The crop cannot be kept long. Mostly the product is sold on the harvest day and it is constantly kept wet. After harvesting, the crop is moved to a shaded, ventilated place, cleaned, bundled and transported to the markets. The crop is not stored, but if the crop is larger than needed for consumption, it is preserved by drying it in the shade.

Cultural Value

Corchorus olitorius is a leading leaf vegetable. Leaves are cooked with meat to make the famous dish *Khudra mafrooka* which is eaten with *Kisra* or *Khudra madpokha* which can be eaten with *kisra*, bread, or rice. The wild variety in Sudan is also cooked. It is famous under the name *Um Takasho*.

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Cultural Expressions

Information not available.

THREATS

In addition to climate change, *Corchorus olitorius* has many pests during all growth stages. Thirty six insect pests belonging to eight orders and 24 families, may cause as much as 12% loss in yield. The most common pest on this plant is grasshoppers.

Sometimes root rot incidence is so serious, it destroys the entire crop.

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