ECHO Asia Seed Fact Sheet

Scientific name – *Abelmoschus esculentus*

English common name – Okra

Asian common names –

- Chinese: 咖啡黄葵 Ka fei huang kui
- Hindi: bhindee
- Korean: 오크라 Oh k'u ra
- Malay: bindi
- Nepalese: वन लसुन van lasun
- Thai: กระเจี๊ยบเขียว krajiap khiow
- Vietnamese: Bụp bắp

Varieties –

- **Bhutanese** – Produces green pods, eaten when 7-10 cm (3-5 in) long.
- **Clemson Spineless** – Spineless pods (less irrigating to the skin) that are easier to harvest than normal varieties. However, the leaves still have irritating spines like other okra varieties.
- **Red Maroon** – Produces dark red pods that can reach 20 cm but are eaten when 12-15 cm long.

General description and special characteristics – Okra is an upright annual about 1 to 2 m (3 to 6 ft.) tall with a main stem and several branches. It is a prolific producer of dark green pods that can be harvested continuously for weeks. Each flower yields a pod, best harvested to be eaten when 8-13 cm (3-5 in.) long and still very tender.

Crop uses (culinary) – In northern Thailand, young pods are boiled and eaten whole with chilli paste. They are also added into stews as thickener.

Seasons of production – In northern Thailand, okra grows best in the hot and cold seasons (October to June).

Length of production and harvest period – Planting Okra at the start of cold season (October) will yield harvest in 4 months, whereas planting during cold season (January) will yield harvest in 6 months. Harvesting can begin 2-3 months after planting and continues for at least two months. If pods are harvested consistently, then the plant will continue to produce more pods over a longer period. Pods should be picked and eaten while their tips are still tender and break with a snap.

Production methods – Okra needs full sunlight on fertile, well-drained soils.

Plant spacing – Establish seedlings at least 30.5 cm (1 ft.) apart.

Pollination – Okra is easily cross-pollinated by insects, therefore varieties should be separated by at least one mile (Ashworth 1991). To prevent crossing, entire plants can be caged or individual blossoms bagged.

Environmental conditions for production – Grows best in hot climatic conditions.

Soil requirements – Grows best on well-manured loam; pH 6.0-7.0.

Known pests – According to the University of Florida IFAS Extension webpage for okra (Mossler and Dunn 2009), the primary pests in okra production are Lepidoptera larvae (caterpillars), aphids, thrips, whiteflies, and stinkbugs. Mites are also considered primary pests in okra. Occasional or minor arthropod pests include cucumber beetles.

Seed saving – According to *Seed to Seed*, still green but fully mature pods can be picked and left to finish drying away from direct sun until they split open. Break dry pods apart to free the seeds and then winnow seeds to remove pod pieces and dirt. Okra will reportedly maintain 50% germination for five years when saved under ideal conditions.

References –

Ashwoth, Suzanne. 1991. Seed to Seed. Seed Savers Exchange, Inc. Decorah, Iowa.

Mossler, M.A. and E. Dunn. 2009. Florida Crop/Pest Management Profile: Okra. Publication PI/57. University of Florida IFAS Extension. Available: http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pi097.