

Vicia ervilia

Vicia ervilia, known as **ervil**^[1] or **bitter vetch**, is an ancient grain legume crop of the Mediterranean region. Besides the English names, other common names include: *gavdaneh* (Persian), *kersannah* (Arabic), *yero* (Spanish), *rovi* (Greek), and *burçak* (Turkish).^[2] The nutritional value of the grain for ruminant cattle has guaranteed the continued cultivation of *V. ervilia* in Morocco, Spain and Turkey. The crop is easy to cultivate and harvest and can be grown on very shallow, alkaline soils.

The grain when split resembles red lentils. For human consumption the bitterness of the seeds needs to be removed through leaching by several changes of boiling water. Owing to this bitterness, it is unlikely that someone would accidentally confuse bitter vetch with red lentils.^[3] According to Zohary and Hopf, only humans of the poorest economic classes consume this crop, or in times of famine;^[4] however, Pliny the Elder states that bitter vetch (*ervum*) has medicinal value like vetch (*vicia*), citing the letters of Augustus where the emperor wrote that he regained his health from a diet of bitter vetch (N.H. 18.38).

Bitter vetch



Scientific classification

Kingdom:	Plantae
<i>Clade</i> :	Angiosperms
<i>Clade</i> :	Eudicots
<i>Clade</i> :	Rosids
Order:	Fabales
Family:	Fabaceae
Tribe:	Fabeae
Genus:	<i>Vicia</i>
Species:	<i>V. ervilia</i>

The grain is an excellent sheep and cattle feed concentrate. It has been held in high esteem by farmers in the Old World since the beginning of agriculture to improve the nutritional value of bulk feeds.^[3]

Binomial name
<i>Vicia ervilia</i> (L.) Willd.

The wild strains of bitter vetch are limited to an area that includes Anatolia and northern Iraq, with an extension south along the Anti-Lebanon Mountains of Syria and Lebanon. Traces of the earliest domesticated instances were recovered from several archeological sites in Turkey, which have an uncorrected radiocarbon dating of the 7th and 6th millennia BC.^[4]

References

1. "BSBI List 2007" (<https://www.webcitation.org/6VqJ46atN?url=http://www.bsbi.org.uk/BSBIList2007.xls>). Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland. Archived from the original (<http://www.bsbi.org.uk/BSBIList2007.xls>) (xls) on 2015-01-25. Retrieved 2014-10-17.
2. L.L. Bellido, "Grain legumes for animal feed" (http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/1492/legume_animal.html) in *Neglected crops: 1492 from a different perspective*, J.E. Bermejo and J. Leon, editors; Plant Production and Protection Series, No. 26 (Rome: FAO), pp. 273-288
3. Enneking & Francis (1997) "Development of *Vicia ervilia* as a grain crop for Southern Australia" (http://members.westnet.com.au/enneking/erv_97.htm)
4. Daniel Zohary, Maria Hopf and Ehud Weiss, *Domestication of Plants in the Old World: The Origin and Spread of Domesticated Plants in Southwest Asia, Europe, and the Mediterranean Basin*, 4th edition (Oxford: University Press, 2012), p. 116

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vicia_ervilia&oldid=897855303"

This page was last edited on 19 May 2019, at 19:51 (UTC).

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.