

Discussion on the Name Property of Kueicai and its Poetry Image in Tang Dynasty

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Abstract

In ancient poetry, the “Kuei” in concepts of verses of “Kuei and Huo facing the sun” refers an University of Technology to Kueicai (*Malva crispa*) that can be used an edible vegetable. However, it has been mistaken as the sunflower. There are various vegetables with names associated with “Kuei”, the specific species of “Kuei” has been disputed. The Kueicai, which was regarded as the “Mother of all vegetables”, is an herb of Malvaceae. Due to its smooth taste, it is also known as “Huachangcai”. Besides its edible value, its seeds have medical values.

In the early Qin period, Kueicai had been widely used as food along the Yellow River region. During the Han, Wei, and Six Dynasties, Kueicai was a very important vegetable, and advanced planting techniques were developed. Since the Tang and Song Dynasties, due to the cultivation and importation of new plant species, the planting areas for Kueicai thus reduced. Moreover, as Chinese medical books pointed out that Kueicai has cold property, may induce chronic illness, may affect the Qi of human body, and should be prohibited for those who have spleen and intestinal problems, especially for pregnant women. As a result, the position of the “Mother of all vegetables” diminished, particularly after the Ming Dynasty.

Keywords: Kueicai, Mother of all vegetables, Image, Source material