

Potentially Important Food Plants of Mali



FOOD PLANT SOLUTIONS
ROTARY ACTION GROUP
Solutions to Malnutrition and Food Security

A project of the Rotary Club of
Devonport North and District 9830

www.foodplantsolutions.org

Potentially Important Food Plants of Mali

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the 3 billion hard working farmers and families around the world who cultivate these, and other, food plants for their own subsistence, and who help conserve them in their rich diversity for other people to enjoy.

Preface

This guide is based on information from the Food Plants International (FPI) database developed by Tasmanian agricultural scientist Bruce French. The source material and guidance for the preparation of the book has been made possible through the support of Food Plants International, the Rotary Clubs of District 9830, particularly the Rotary Club of Devonport North who founded Food Plant Solutions, (previously the Learn&Grow project), and many volunteers who have assisted in various ways.

The selection of plants included in this guide has been developed by Lyndie Kite working in a voluntary capacity using the selection criteria developed by Food Plant Solutions. These selection criteria focus on the local plants from each of the main food groups with the highest levels of nutrients important to human nutrition and alleviation of malnutrition. It is intended as a **Draft Guide only** to indicate some important food plants that serve as examples for this purpose. Other important nutritious plants may be equally useful, and it is recommended that the FPI database be used to source information on the full range of plants known to occur in Mali. This guide has been developed with the best intention to create interest and improve understanding of the important local food plants of Mali, and on the understanding that it will be further edited and augmented by local specialists with appropriate knowledge and understanding of local food plants.

Food Plant Solutions was initiated by the Rotary Club of Devonport North to assist in creating awareness of the edible plant database developed by Food Plants International, and its potential in addressing malnutrition and food security in any country of the world. In June 2007, Food Plant Solutions was established as a project of Rotary District 9830, the Rotary Club of Devonport North and Food Plants International. The primary objective of the project is to increase awareness and understanding of the vast food resource that exists in the form of local plants, well adapted to the prevailing conditions where they naturally occur, and how this resource may be used to address hunger, malnutrition and food security. For more information, visit the website www.foodplantsolutions.org. More detailed or specific information on plants, including references to material by other authors, is available on DVD on request.

Disclaimer: This Field Guide has been produced using information from the “Edible Plants of the World” database compiled by Bruce French of Food Plants International. Although great care has been taken by Food Plants International and Food Plant Solutions, neither organisation, or the people involved in the compilation of the database or this Field Guide:

- makes any expressed or implied representation as to the accuracy of the information contained in the database or the Field Guide, and cannot be held legally responsible or accept liability for any errors or omissions
- can be held responsible for claims arising from the mistaken identity of plants or their inappropriate use
- assume responsibility for sickness, death or other harmful effects resulting from eating or using any plant described in the database or this Field Guide

Always be sure you have the correct plant, and undertake proper preparation methods, by consulting with specialist scientists or local users of the plant. The Food Plants International database, from which the information in this Field Guide is drawn, is a work in progress and is regularly being amended and updated.

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Introduction

Potentially Important Food Plants of Mali has been produced to provide information on approximately 40 edible plants that are known to grow in Mali. These plants come from all the major food groups and have been chosen because of their high nutritional value. Many of the plants in this book may be neglected and under-utilised plants. This means they may not be well known. However, because they are high in many beneficial nutrients, and they are already adapted to the environment, and therefore likely to require minimal inputs, they could be important food plants that are likely to be superior to imported foods and plants. Commercially grown plants may also be included in the book, but only if they are significant foods for household consumption. It is hoped people will become confident and informed about how to grow and use these plants as many local food plants provide very good quality food.

Growing food

Growing food to feed a family is, without doubt, one of the most important things anyone can do. The more interest you take in your garden and the more you learn about plants and how to grow them well, the more interesting and fun food gardening becomes.

A country with very special plants

The local food plants of most countries have not been promoted and highlighted in the way they deserve. Visiting a local food market will quickly show what a rich variety of food plants can be grown in this country. Good information about these plants is often still in the minds and experience of local farmers, and has not been written down in books. This can make it hard for the next generation of young people to find out how to grow them.

In many countries, some of the traditional food plants are only harvested from the wild and others are only known in small areas. Others have hundreds of varieties and are the main food for people in different regions. Information on all these plants, their food value and the pest and diseases that damage them is available in the Food Plants International database.

Getting to know plants

People who spend time in gardens and with their food plants get to know them very well. It is a good idea to learn from someone who grows plants well. Each plant grows best in certain conditions and there are often special techniques in getting it to grow well. For example, sweet potato will not form tubers if the soil is too wet, but it may still grow lots of green leaves. Taro will grow in light shade, but sweet potato will not. Ginger can grow in fairly heavy shade. Pruning the tips of betel leaf or pepper vines will cause more side branches to grow and therefore, produce more fruit. Stored yam tubers need special treatment if you want them to put out shoots early. There are lots of unique things about every plant and learning about these helps a good gardener produce more food.

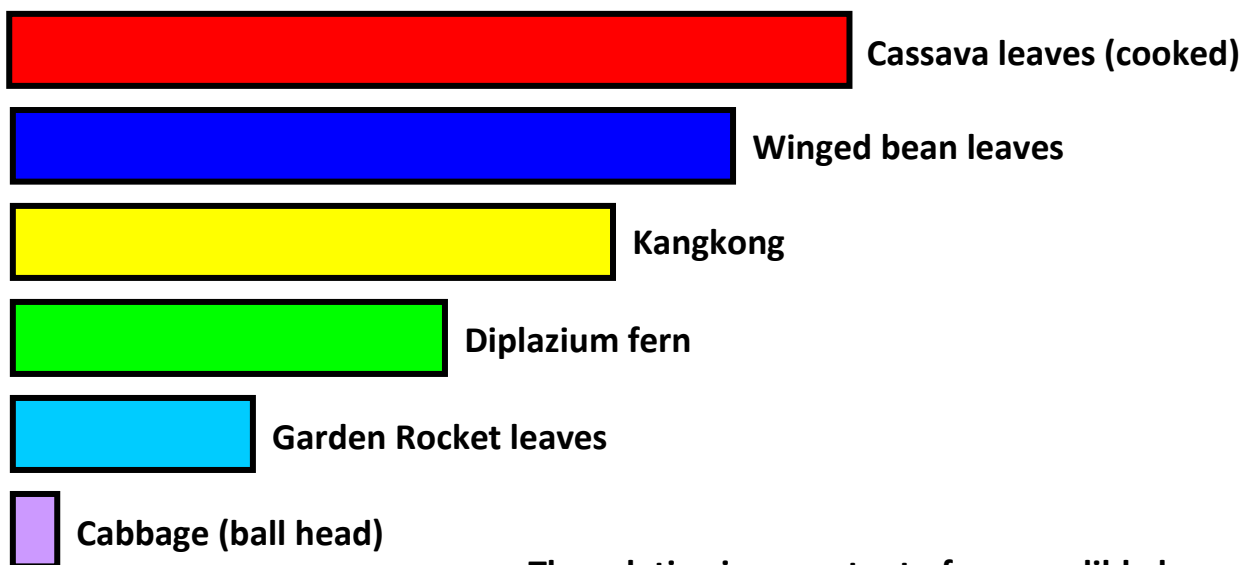
Naming of plants

Many food plants have local names, as well as a common English name. Every type of plant also has its own scientific name. Although the scientific name might not be widely recognised, this is the link by which people in different countries and with different languages can recognise the same plant. We know that many plants are grown in many different countries, but relying on local or common names, we might not recognise the same plant grown in different places. By using scientific names to accurately identify plants, we can get useful information from people in other countries. Wherever possible, plants in this book are named by their common English name and their scientific name.

Local food plants are often very good

People sometimes think that local food plants are not very special and that any food plant that is new or comes from another country must be a lot better. This is often not true. Many of the newer or introduced food plants, such as the round or ballhead cabbages, have very little food value. Many traditional tropical green, leafy vegetables and ferns have 10 times or more food value as ballhead cabbage or lettuce. It is important to find out more information about the food value of different foods if we want to eat well. Citrus fruit, such as lemons and oranges, are often grown for vitamin C that helps keep people healthy. These fruits do not grow well in the tropics- the common guava fruit has three times as much vitamin C and is loved by children. This is just one example that there are often much better choices of local foods with higher levels of important nutrients.

Our bodies need a variety of food plants to enable us to grow, stay healthy and have enough energy to work. Different foods are needed to provide energy, protein, vitamins and minerals. The following diagram highlights the iron content value of some traditional edible, tropical plant leaves, compared with cabbage. Iron is a nutrient that is very important for our bodies and especially our blood. People who are short of iron become anaemic and lack energy.



The relative iron content of some edible leaves

A healthy balanced diet

Good nutrition, or eating a healthy balanced diet, is really very simple. If people eat a wide range of food plants, their bodies will normally get a balanced amount of all the different nutrients they require. If a nutrient is lacking in one food plant, then they are likely to get it from another plant if they are eating a range of food plants. For this reason, everybody should eat a range of different food plants every day. The food group that is especially important for young people is the dark green leaves. Everyone should eat a good serving of dark green leaves every day. They have many vitamins and minerals, as well as protein. There are many spices or flavouring plants that can improve the taste of foods, but taste should be considered separately from food value.

Learning to cook well

Even though some nutrients in food can lose some of their value during cooking, it is normally much safer to cook all food plants, at least for a short time. Bacteria, which cause diarrhoea, can occur in gardens and on food plants. These are killed during cooking. Many plants in the tropics develop cyanide, a chemical that makes them bitter and poisonous. This happens often with

cassava (tapioca, manioc) and beans, but can also occur in many other plants. Boiling the food for two minutes normally destroys cyanide and makes the food safe to eat. Some of the nutrients our bodies need (such as vitamin A for good eyesight) only become available when food is cooked in oil.

Learning to grow “wild” food plants

Many plants grow wild in the bush and are not cultivated by people. We can normally find someone who has taken an interest in them and has learned to grow them. This may be people from a different language group. It may be that in their area they have found better types than the ones that simply grow wild.

Saving better types of plants

If we simply allow plants to grow from seed, the improvements that have been made in finding sweeter or better types may get lost. Some fruit trees are like this and the fruit produced may not be sweet at all. It is often necessary to take cuttings from a tree to be sure the new plant is exactly the same as the old one. If the plants won't easily grow from cuttings simply by sticking a piece of the branch in the ground, there are other ways of helping these plants to form roots and start to grow. One good way is to make a small cut in the bark of a young branch and then wrap soil around the cut and cover it with plastic. With plants like guava, new roots will start to grow from this cut and grow into the soil wrapped around the branch. It can then be cut off and planted. This is called air-layering. A similar method is used with the roots of breadfruit. A shallow root is uncovered and a small cut made from which a new sucker will start to grow. This can be cut off and replanted.

Growing from cuttings and suckers

Many food plants are grown from cuttings and suckers. This is very important, as it allows all the different kinds of yams, taros, bananas, sweet potato and sugarcane to be continually grown and ensures the varieties are preserved. Each plant has its own special propagation method. It is important to use healthy planting material, as diseases can be spread in planting material.

Saving seed

Some food plants are grown from seed. Sometimes this is very easy as the seeds are large, store well, grow easily and grow the same as the original plant. It is more difficult with other plants. Many large fleshy seeds, such as breadfruit, need to be planted while still fresh as they do not store easily. Other seeds do not “breed true” or do not grow into new plants that are the same as the original plants. For example, the fruit may not be as large or sweet or have the same colour or taste. With many of these plants, it may be necessary to find ways of growing them from cuttings or other methods such as grafting. Some plants “inbreed” and get smaller or poorer. This happens when a plant self-pollinates or receives pollen from a close relative. Corn grown in small plots normally does this and the plants grown from seed grown in this situation get smaller and smaller each year. The seed needs to be saved from several different plants with different history and then mixed together before sowing. All the seeds on one cob are related and will inbreed. Some seeds develop a hard seed coat and need to be scratched, soaked in water, or even put into hot water, before they will start to grow. Saving local seeds is often a good idea as they are already adapted to local conditions. For example, seed saved from pumpkins grown locally will produce plants with less pest and disease damage than those grown from imported seed. *If you can't get seeds or planting material from local gardens – it is probably not a suitable local plant!*

Growing a garden of mixed plants

In nature, one variety of one plant never grows alone. There are always lots of different plants of different kinds and sizes, all growing together. Anyone who has ever walked into a tropical jungle will know this very well. The reason people all over the world want to save the rainforest is because it has so many different kinds of plants all growing together. Growing plants in a food garden in a way similar to how they grow in nature, as a mixed group of plants, is very good agriculture. Mixing plants in a garden usually gives more reliable food production, as any disease from one plant will wash off in the rain onto a different plant, where it cannot survive. Small plants fill the gaps and reduce the need for weeding.

Different types of plants for food security

There is another reason for growing a range of food plants in a local garden or around a village. If something goes wrong, like extreme insect damage to plants, some disease occurring in the garden, or a poor growing season, some plants will be more damaged than others. With a variety of plants, there will still be some food to eat until the other plants recover and grow again. Also, a wide variety of plants will mean that different ones will be maturing at different times, which helps ensure a continuous supply of food. There are shrubs that can be planted as edible hedges around houses, and fruit and nut trees that need to be planted as a gift for your children, several years before they will be able to enjoy them. Some nuts can be stored and eaten when other foods are not available. Most yams will store well for a few months.

Looking after the soil

Gardeners in traditional tropical agriculture usually move their gardens often by shifting to a new piece of land. There are usually three reasons for this:

- In the tropical lowlands, weeds can become a very big problem. There are usually a lot fewer weeds in the first year or two after clearing and burning the land, but weeds increase in the following years.
- Some of the nutrients in the soil are used each year and the soil becomes poorer and plants do not grow as well. There are ways of reducing this loss of nutrients.
- Very small worms called nematodes build up in the soil after a few years and get into the roots, especially of annual vegetable plants, and stop their roots working properly. For example, root knot nematode will cause the roots of plants like tomatoes and beans to become twisted resulting in poor growth of the plant.

Building up the soil

When a new garden has been cleared, it has lots of leaf mulch and other old plant material. This provides plant nutrients for new plants to grow. There is a simple rule for growing plants and improving the soil—"If it has lived once, it can live again." Any old plant material can provide nutrients for new plants to grow, but it must be allowed to rot into mulch or compost for this to happen. If this plant material is burnt, some nutrients, especially phosphorus and potassium ("potash"), get left behind in the ashes for new plants to use, although it also allows these important nutrients to be lost by being washed away by rain. But with burning other important nutrients, such as nitrogen and sulphur, get lost in the smoke and disappear from the garden and soil. These last two plant nutrients are especially important for growing green leaves and when their levels are low, plants grow small or pale green. When nitrogen is lacking, the old leaves of the plant go pale and fall off early, and when sulphur is lacking, the young leaves go pale. Wherever possible, old plant material should be covered with some soil to allow it to rot down and not simply dry out or get burnt.

Poor soils where crops won't grow

When soils are very acid (or sour), plants cannot get the necessary nutrients. Natural chemicals in the soil that are toxic to plants when present at higher levels become soluble, get into plants, and stop them growing. Adding limestone to these soils can improve them. Using compost will not make them less acid, but will keep the plant nutrients in the soil in a more readily available form that plants can use.

Soil nutrients

Plants need 16 different kinds of plant food or nutrients in different amounts to grow properly. A plant that has already been growing will have these nutrients in them and probably even have them in a balanced amount. That is why composting old plant material is so important. Plants usually show some signs or symptoms if any of these nutrients is running out.

One of the most common and important nutrients for plant growth is nitrogen, which actually comes from the air, but gets into plants through the soil. When plants are short of nitrogen, their older leaves often become yellow or pale. When grass family plants, like sugarcane and corn, are short of nitrogen, the centre of the oldest (lowest) leaves starts to develop a dry or dead V-shape. The plant cannot find enough nitrogen in the soil so it gets it from an old leaf to grow a new leaf. This causes the old leaf to die, forming a characteristic V-shape in the centre of the leaf. The plant does not get any bigger as an old leaf dies each time a new leaf is produced. Village farmers often walk through grassland before they clear it for gardens, looking to see if the grass leaves are dry and dead, because they know gardens on this soil won't grow well. It is necessary to use compost or legumes (such as beans) to put nitrogen back into the soil. Growing plants from the bean family (legumes) is the most efficient way to increase the level of nitrogen in the soil.

Corn is a good plant for indicating which nutrients are running short in the soil. If the older leaves go dry along the edges, the soil is running out of potash. If leaves that are normally green develop a bluish colour, the soil is short of phosphorus. Generally, leafy crops need lots of nitrogen, and root crops need lots of potash.

Making compost

Compost is old plant material that has been allowed to rot down into a fine, sweet smelling mulch that is full of nutrients that can be put back on the soil to grow new plants. Making good compost is very simple. A simple heap of plant material can be made in the corner of a garden or near a house. The composting process is carried out by small bacteria that live in the soil and feed on decaying plants. They break down old plant material into compost. These bacteria are living, so they need air, water and food. A good compost heap must have air, so don't cover it with plastic or put it in a container. This makes a foul smelling compost, as different bacteria that don't need air turn it into an acid mixture that preserves it. Good compost must have moisture, so keep the heap damp, but not too wet. The compost bacteria like a balanced diet, which means that both green material and dried material is needed to balance the carbon and nitrogen in the compost pile. If the compost material gets too dry and brown, it will not break down, and if it gets too green, it will go slimy. Using a little bit of compost from an old heap will make sure the right bacteria are there to start the whole process off. As soon as the plant material is broken down to a fine mulch it can be put onto the garden. It is best if it is dug in, but if it is regularly put onto the surface of the garden, worms will mix it into the soil.

Pests

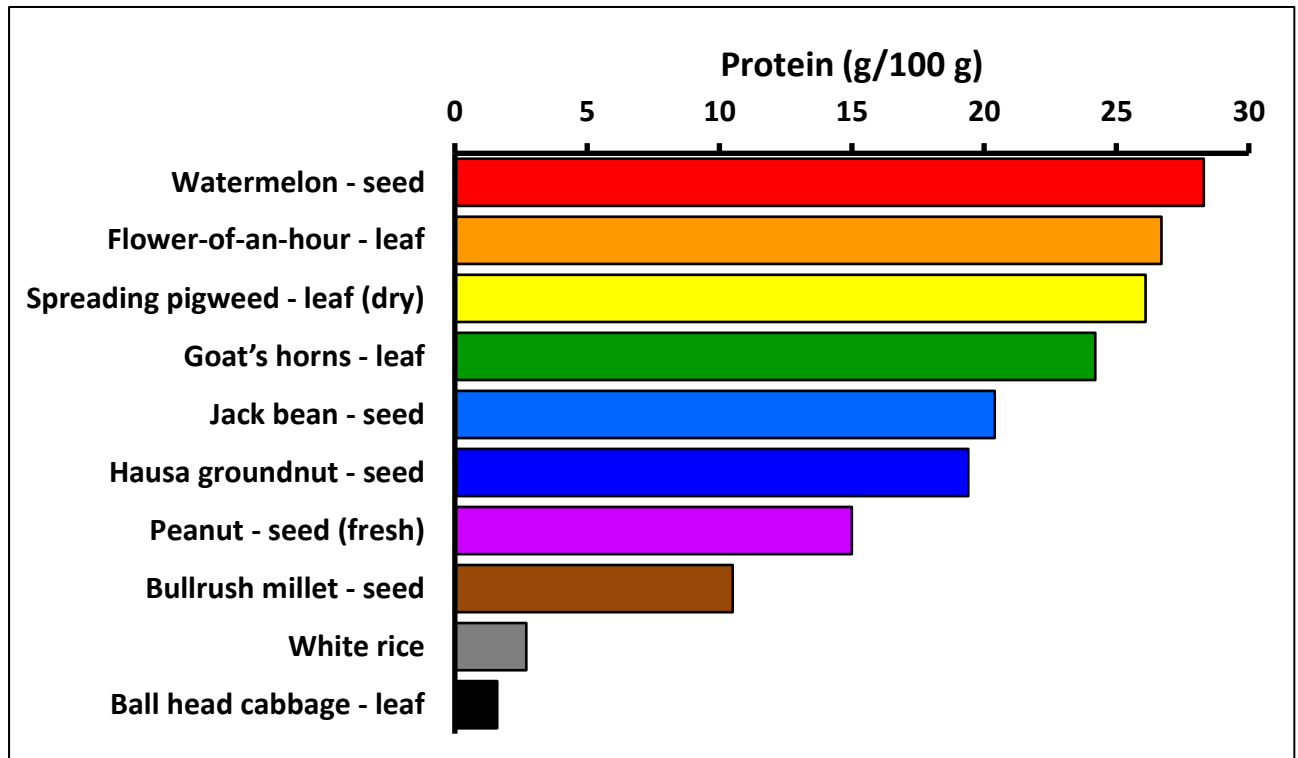
There are a large number of insects that enjoy sharing our food with us! We should not try to kill all these insects as they have an important role to play in keeping everything in nature in balance.

What we need to do is to learn to manage these insects so we can all get some food to eat! Some insects are attracted to lights, and if the garden is near village lights some insects can cause a lot of damage. If large areas of one particular crop are planted, insects can breed more quickly and cause a lot of damage. As an example, insects called armyworms can breed up in large numbers on the shade trees of cacao and then move “like an army” into gardens. Some insects are large and breed slowly and can be picked off and removed. The large, green grubs with pointy tips that hide under taro leaves are best controlled by simply picking them off. Some insects, like taro beetles, can be a serious problem, but the young curl grubs of this insect are tasty if you catch and cook them. Some insects do not like sunlight. The very small moth that damages banana fruit is like this. Simply pulling off the leafy bracts over the banana fruit reduces the damage, as this lets sunlight in and the insect flies away. The best rule for reducing pest damage is to grow healthy plants, as they suffer less damage.

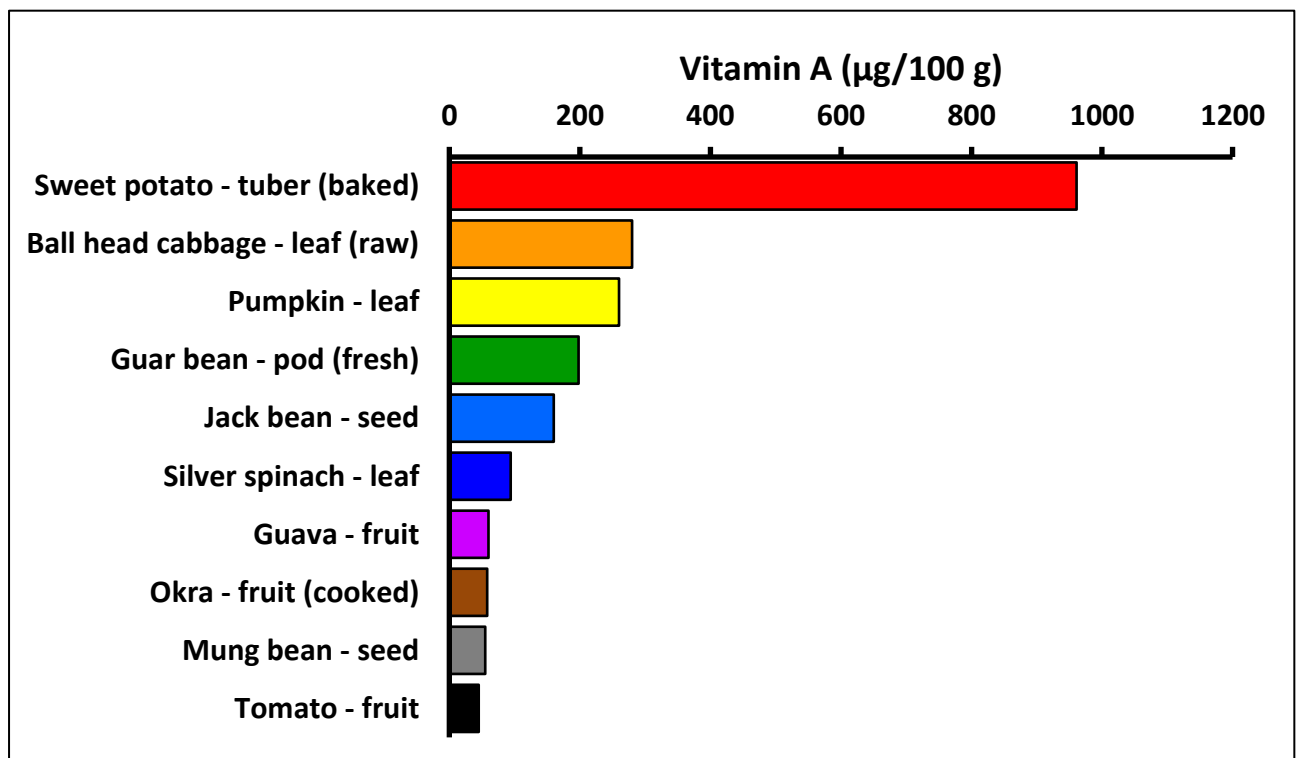
Diseases

The living organisms that cause disease are much smaller than insects. These disease organisms can often only be seen with a microscope. There are three main kinds of disease organisms-fungi, bacteria and viruses. Fungi are like the mushrooms we eat, only very much smaller. They usually make distinct dry spots on leaves and other plant parts. Fungi have spores that often blow in the wind. Bacteria are often smaller and live in damp places. They usually make plants go soft and squashy, and they may cause a smell. Bacteria are mostly spread with rain and in water. Viruses are very, very small and usually make irregular stripes and patterns on leaves and other plant parts. Viruses usually spread in planting material or in the mouths of small sucking insects. One common fungus disease on sweet potato causes the leaves to become wrinkled and twisted. It usually gets worse in old gardens and where soils are running out of nutrients. It doesn't affect all kinds of sweet potato to the same extent. The answer is not to stop the disease, but to improve the soil. The general rule is that healthy plants that are growing well will suffer less damage from disease.

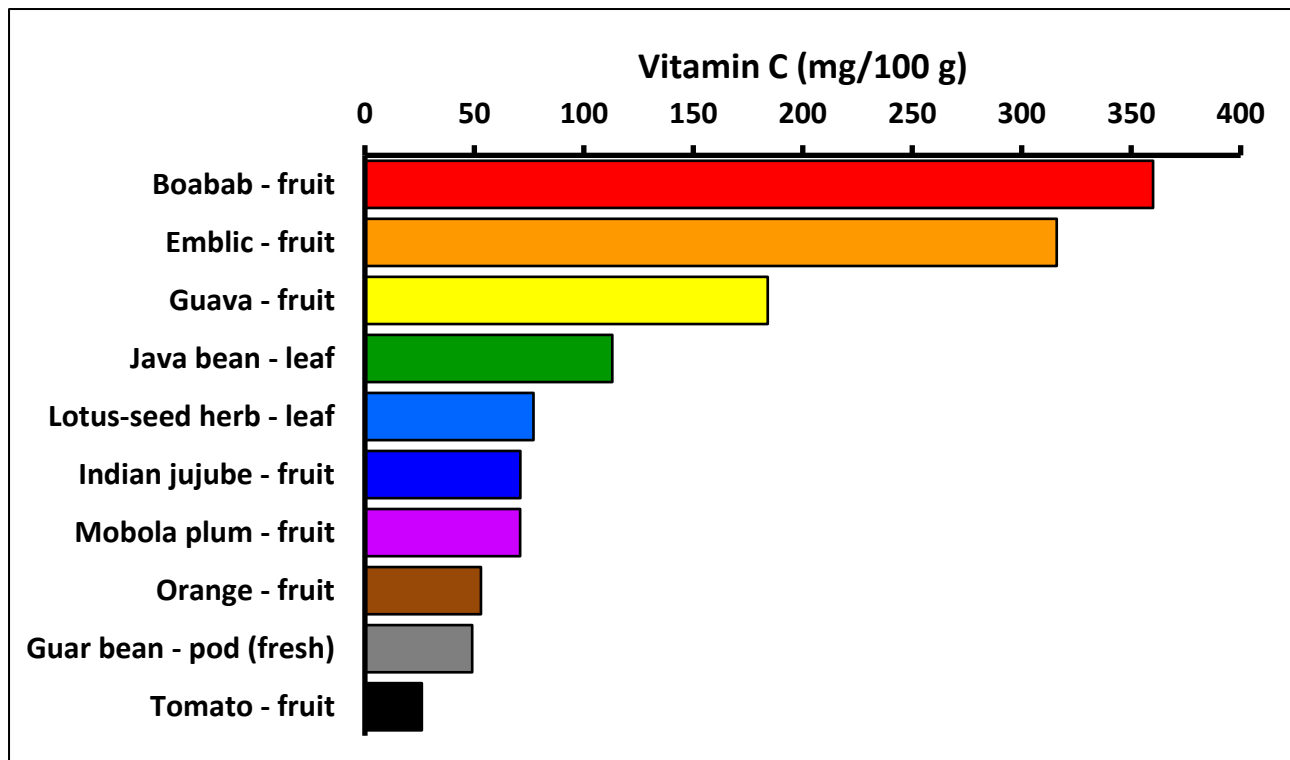
Food value charts for a selection of plants from Mali



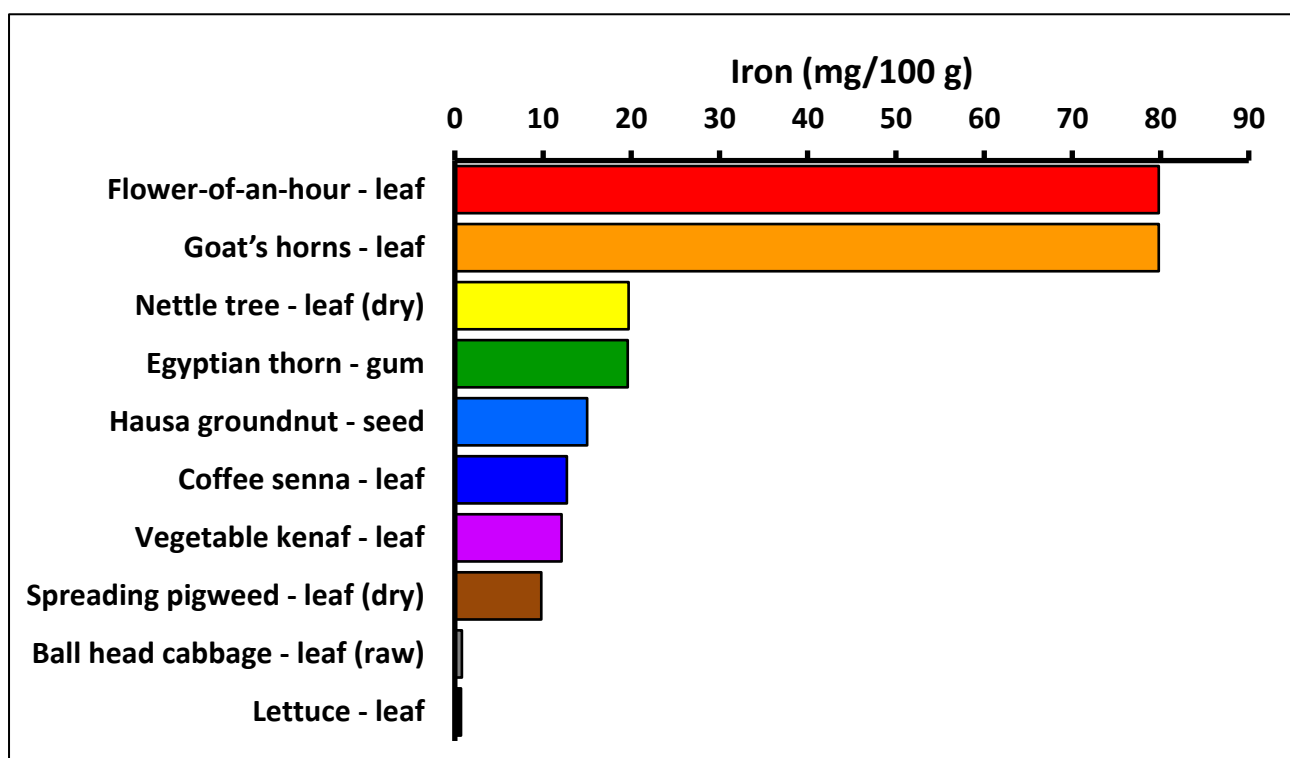
Protein helps the body repair cells and make new ones. Protein is also important for growth and development in children, teens, and pregnant women. Symptoms of protein deficiency include wasting and shrinkage of muscle tissue, and slow growth (in children).



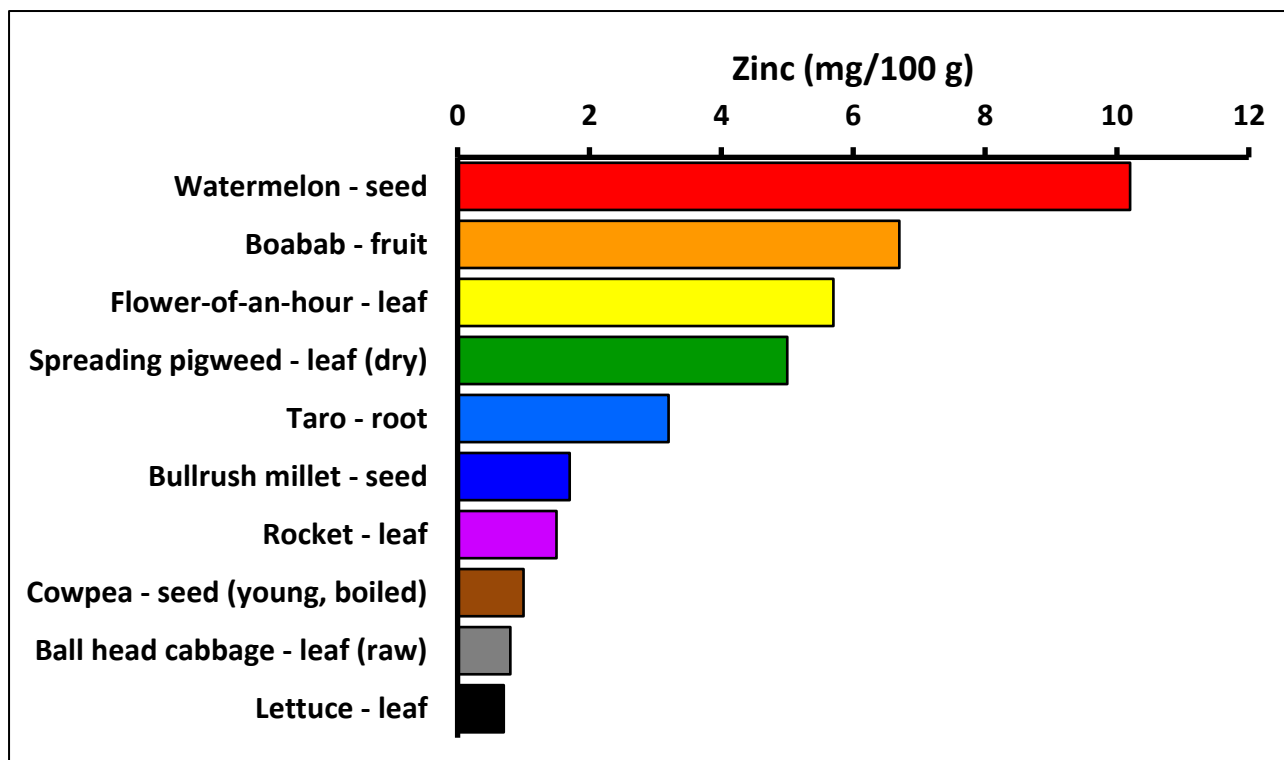
Vitamin A is very important for eyesight and fighting disease, particularly in infants, young children and pregnant women. People who are short of Vitamin A have trouble seeing at night.



Vitamin C helps us avoid sickness, heal wounds, prevent infections and absorb iron from food. Severe vitamin C deficiency increases the risk of scurvy with symptoms such as inflammation of the gums, scaly skin, nosebleed and painful joints.



Iron is important because it helps red blood cells carry oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body. Low levels of iron cause anaemia, which makes us feel fatigued. Iron is also important to maintain healthy cells, skin, hair and nails. Iron is more available when Vitamin C is also present.



Zinc is particularly important for the health of young children and teenagers, and to help recovery from illness. It is needed for the body's immune system to work properly. It plays a role in cell division, cell growth, wound healing, and the breakdown of carbohydrates. Zinc is also needed for the senses of smell and taste. Zinc deficiency is characterized by stunted growth, loss of appetite, and impaired immune function.

Note regarding plant selection: In compiling these field guides, we acknowledge that some staple foods and commercial crops which are grown widely in the target country may be omitted. Such foods are often in the starchy staple category (e.g. rice, corn). This does not mean that they are not useful, but merely reflects a desire for the Food Plant Solutions project to concentrate on plants that are less well known and/or underutilised.

Starchy staples

English: Taro

Local:

Scientific name: *Colocasia esculenta*

Plant family: ARACEAE

Description: This plant has large flat leaves on the end of upright leaf stalks. It grows up to 1 m high. The leaf stalk or petiole joins the leaf towards the centre of the leaf. The leaves are 20-50 cm long. Near the ground a thickened rounded corm is produced. Around this plant there is normally a ring of small plants called suckers. Many different varieties occur. If left to maturity, a lily type flower is produced in the centre of the plant. It has a spathe 15-30 cm long which is rolled inwards. The flowers are yellow and fused along the stalk. There are many named cultivated varieties. Taro comes in two basic forms. The Dasheen type *Colocasia esculenta* var. *esculenta* and *Colocasia esculenta* var. *antiquorum* or the Eddoe type. The basic difference is the adaptation of the Eddoe type to storage and survival in seasonally dry places, while the dasheen type needs to be maintained in a more or less continuously growing vegetative stage.



Distribution: It is a tropical plant. Taro grows from sea level up to about 2300 m altitude in the tropics. It grows well in humid places. It can stand damp soil and grow under light shade. It suits hardiness zones 9-12.

Use: The corms, petioles and leaves are all edible after cooking. The leaves are also dried and stored. Fresh leaves can be stored for 4-5 days. **Caution:** Some varieties burn the throat due to oxalate crystals.

Cultivation: Taro can be planted from cormels or from the top of the central corm. Other sections of the corm could also be used but this is not commonly done. Flowering of taro and seed production can lead to new cultivars. Flowering can be promoted by the use of gibberellic acid. The general growth pattern is for an increase in top growth, in terms of leaf number, leaf area and petiole length, to continue for about 6 months under tropical lowland conditions then for each of these to decrease and tuber storage to continue to increase. Corm weight increases significantly from 5-11 months. Starch content also increases with time but protein content declines over the corm development period.

Taro can be grown under flooded conditions but root rots develop if the water becomes stagnant. For flooded cultivation, the land is cleared, ploughed, cultivated and puddled. The aim is to get a field that is flat with embankments allowing the impounding of water. Planting is done into 2-5 cm of standing water.

For dryland taro, the soil is prepared by digging, unless a fresh bush fallow is used where the natural friability of the soil allows plants to be put into the undug soil in a small hole that is prepared. Plants are put into a hole 5-7 cm deep or deeper. Mulching to conserve moisture and reduce weed growth is beneficial. Setts from corms normally give higher yield than that from

cormels. The greater leaf area and root production may be responsible for this. Setts of about 150 g are optimum.

The time of planting is primarily determined by the availability of moisture. Planting is done shortly after the rainfall has become regular, if seasonally distinct wet and dry occur. Higher rainfall, higher temperatures, and higher hours of sunlight, enhance production and determine seasonality of production.

Evapotranspiration for flooded taro averages about 4 mm per day, ranging from 1.5-7.2 mm, with a total of about 1200 mm for the crop. Intermittent moisture can result in irregular shaped corms. Flooding has been found to be more effective than sprinkler irrigation, or furrow irrigation. Increased suckering, giving greater leaf area, seems to be the reason for this.

Taro is sensitive to weed competition throughout most of its growth, but it is more critical during early growth up to 3-4 months. About 7-9 weedings are required, to keep the crop clean under tropical lowland conditions, where flooding is not used. Due to the decrease in height and leaf area towards the end of the growth cycle when starch accumulation in the corms is maximum, weed competition and weed control are again significant. Mechanical weeding needs to be shallow to avoid damaging the superficial taro roots. A range of herbicides have been recommended in various situations.

Taro produces the highest dry matter yield under full sunlight, but it can still grow under moderate shade. Under shaded conditions it grows more slowly and develops fewer cormels. They require good moisture conditions and have little tolerance for drought. Taro residue has an allelopathic factor which can reduce the germination and growth of other plants, for example, beans.

Taro tends to demand high fertility, and is responsive to additional NPK fertiliser. Higher doses of K increases starch content and higher doses of N increases protein content. Both N and K applications increase oxalic acid content of the tubers.

Spacing affects total yield, and marketable, harvestable yield, of corms. Close spacing increases the corm yield per area, and the shoot yield per area, but decreases the corm yield per plant, and the contribution of sucker corms, to the yield. Where spacings of 30 cm x 30 cm are used, giving about 110,000 plants per hectare, a very large amount of planting material is required, which reduces the net return per unit of planting material. A spacing of 60 cm x 60 cm is more common. Wider spacings of 90 cm x 90 cm reduces overall yield.

Production: Crops mature in 6-18 months. Yields of 5-15 tonnes per hectare are probably average.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
root	66.8	1231	1.96	3	5	0.68	3.2
leaf	85.0	210	5.0	57	90	0.62	0.7
leaf stalk	93.0	101	0.5	180	13	0.9	-
leaf (cooked)	92.2	100	2.7	424	35.5	1.2	0.2

Starchy staples

English: Finger millet

Local:

Scientific name: *Eleusine coracana*

Plant family: POACEAE

Description: An annual millet grass. It is robust and forms many tillers or young shoots from the base. It grows 40-120 cm tall. The stems are somewhat flattened and the leaves are narrow. The flower heads are made up of 2-7 finger like spikes, 1.5 cm across and 10-15 cm long. These in turn have about 70 smaller spikes. Each one of these smaller spikes has 4-7 seeds. The seeds are roughly rounded and 1-2 mm across. There are *coracana* and *africana* subsp.



Distribution: It is a very drought resistant tropical plant. For good yields, it needs good soil drainage and adequate moisture. It cannot stand water-logging. It is an important crop in areas where annual rainfall is 900-1250 mm. It especially suits areas with long hot summers. It needs a minimum temperature above 18°C and does best where temperatures are above 27°C. It grows from sea level to 2,400 m altitude in Africa. It is a short day length plant and does best where day length is 12 hours. It can grow in arid places.

Use: The seed are eaten either roasted or ground into flour. This is used for porridge and flat bread. Alcohol is brewed from the grain. The leaves are also edible.

Cultivation: It is grown from seed. Often plants are grown mixed with sorghum or maize. Good soil preparation is needed to reduce weed competition. Seed can be broadcast or drilled. Young plants need to be weeded and thinned. Seed viability drops to about 50 % after 2 years. Spacings of 5 cm apart in rows 30-33 cm apart, or 10-12 cm apart in rows 25 cm apart are recommended. About 25-35 kg of seed per hectare are needed if seed are broadcast. 5-10 kg per hectare are required if seed are drilled. Using fertiliser can dramatically increase yield. 125 kg per hectare of sulphate of ammonia when plants are 15 cm high is used in Uganda.

Production: It is self-pollinating and pollination occurs over 8-10 days. Millet seed stores very well and can be stored without damage for 10 years. Often it is stored on the head. Yields of about 450-900 kg of dried grain per hectare are usual. This can easily be increased to 1650 kg per hectare. Crops take 3-6 months until harvest.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
seed	11.7	1594	6.2	-	-	5.3	-

Starchy staples

English: Bullrush millet

Scientific name: *Pennisetum glaucum*

Local:

Plant family: POACEAE

Description: An annual grass that grows to 3 m tall. The leaf blades are 20-100 cm long by 2-5 cm wide. The flower is dense and 40-50 cm long by 1.2-1.5 cm wide. They also vary in shape and size. Plants that tiller produce smaller heads. The species varies a lot. There are 13 cultivated, 15 weed and 6 wild races of this grass. It has a cylindrical ear like a bullrush. The grains are small and round and have a shiny grey colour like pearls. There are thousands of cultivated varieties.

Distribution: A tropical plant that suits regions with a short growing season. It grows in areas with less than 600 mm of rainfall. It is replaced with sorghum between 600-1200 mm rainfall and then by finger millet or maize above 1200 mm rainfall. It is important in the drier areas of India and Pakistan. It can grow in arid places.

Use: The seeds are eaten like rice. They are also ground into flour and made into bread and cakes. They are used to make alcoholic drinks. They are mixed with other grains and seeds to make fermented foods. Some kinds have sweet stalks that are chewed. The young ears can be roasted and eaten like sweet corn.

Cultivation: Plants are grown from seed. It is usually sown directly into the field. The plant density is adjusted to suit rainfall and soil fertility. The spacing is 45 cm apart up to 200 cm apart. It is also intercropped with other crops such as cowpea, sorghum and peanut. Crops are normally weeded 2 or 3 times.

Production: It takes from 75-180 days to maturity. The heads can be picked by hand or the plant removed. Some types need to be picked 2 or 3 times as heads mature.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
seed	11.6	1442	10.5	-	-	6.5	1.7



Starchy staples

English: Cassava

Local:

Scientific name: *Manihot esculenta*

Plant family: EUPHORBIACEAE

Description: A plant which can re-grow year after year from the thickened roots. It has several stems. The stems are woody and have some branches. Plants grow up to 3 metres tall. Stalks have distinct scars where leaves have fallen. The leaves tend to be near the ends of branches. The leaves are divided like the fingers on a hand. The leaves have long leaf stalks. The leaves have 3-7 long lobes which can be 20 cm long. These are widest about 1/3 of the distance from the tip and taper towards the base. The colour varies. It produces several long tubers. These can be 50 cm long by 10 cm across. The flowers are on short stalks around a central stalk. They are produced near the ends of branches. The female flowers are near the base of the flower stalk and the male flowers higher up.



Distribution: A tropical plant. Plants grow from sea level up to about 1650 m. In Fiji they grow to 900 m. They can grow in poor soil and can survive drought. It is native to tropical America. It grows between 25°N and 25°S and needs a rainfall above 750 mm. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

Use: The tubers are eaten after thorough cooking. They are boiled, roasted or made into flour. The starch is used in puddings, soups and dumplings. Young leaves are edible after cooking. They are also sometimes dried and stored. Seeds are also eaten. **Caution:** Bitter kinds of cassava contain poison but this is destroyed on heating. This kind of cassava should be cooked, sun dried, soaked and cooked again.

Cultivation: Cassava is planted from sections of the stalk. Sections about 15-20 cm long of the more mature woody stem are cut and stuck into the ground. They can be completely buried or put at almost any angle and it affects the growth little. Soon roots form and leaves start to sprout from the stalk. Cassava seeds need a soil temperature of 30°C for their germination. Flower and fruit production is more common under lower temperatures such as in highland or less equatorial conditions.

It is not necessary to dig a hole to plant cassava and on many soils where the soil is loose it can be planted without digging the soil first. Cassava does not suit waterlogged soils and preferably they should not be too shallow or stony.

Cassava can be planted at any time of the year but to get started it needs moisture so is often planted near the beginning of the wet season. The crop once established can survive for several months without rain. The ability to tolerate drought varies significantly with cultivar. During drought less and smaller leaves are produced and leaves die off more quickly but storage roots can be increased in the short term.

Because cassava can still grow satisfactorily in poorer soils it is often put last in a rotation after others crops have already been grown on the piece of land. Cassava is more responsive to

nitrogen and potassium than phosphorus under many field situations. Nitrogen can increase cyanide levels. Under very acid conditions with high soluble aluminium levels, cassava has been able to achieve and maintain top growth but with significantly reduced root yields. When drainage is good and soil moisture is adequate, cassava stalks can be planted at any orientation from horizontal to vertical, but in very sandy soils horizontal planting is best and in heavy clay soils vertical planting is best.

Because of the slow growth in early establishment stages, soil loss from erosion with heavy rains can be significant. To avoid this planting should be timed so that the maximum vegetative growth is occurring during the heaviest rains. A leaf area index between 2.5-3.5 is optimal for cassava yield. The critical period for weed control is the time from 2-8 weeks after planting. Cassava tuber bulking is delayed under shaded conditions. Yields are also reduced. In mixed cropping situations using crops which mature early, allowing the cassava time to recover, is one possible strategy. For optimum production shading should be avoided.

Cassava takes about 10-12 months to produce mature tubers in the lowlands tropics although some varieties produce a smaller yield earlier. Yields in the range of 20-45 t/ha have been recorded for 12-14 month crops. The plants can be left growing and the tubers stored in the soil for considerable time. Crops of 24 months duration occur. Once the tubers have been dug they do not keep for more than a few days. Pre-harvest pruning of plants increases the storage time of tubers after harvest.

Spacing and plant density varies with soil climatic conditions and variety. Plant densities from 10000-30000 plants per hectare are used. Plants from the higher density crops have been shown to have quick post-harvest deterioration. Mulching has given significant yield increases in some conditions. It also reduces the incidence and damage of some root boring insects.

Production: Plants can be harvested after 10 months in the lowlands. There are some faster growing varieties. Yields in the range of 20-45 t/ha have been recorded for 12-14 month crops.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
tuber	62.8	625	1.4	30	15	0.23	0.48
leaf	82.0	382	7.1	57	275	7.6	-

Starchy staples

English: Pencil yam

Local:

Scientific name: *Vigna vexillata*

Plant family: FABACEAE

Description: A variable climbing herb that keeps growing from year to year. It has a narrow woody rootstock that is dull white and wrinkled. The hairy vines are 30 cm to 3 m long. The leaves have 3 leaflets and these are oval or long. They can be 3-16 cm long by 0.4-8 cm wide. They taper towards the tip and are rounded at the base. The leaf stalk is 2-11 cm long. The flowering stalks are in the axils of leaves and have 2-6 flowers. The flowering stalk is 5-36 cm long. The pea like flower has a standard which is 2-3 cm long and not the same on both sides. Flowers are pink or purple.



The keel is paler with a beak curved back at the end and twisted to one side. The fruit are pods which are held erect. They are 4-14 cm long by 3-4 mm wide and covered with short brown hairs. There are 10-18 seeds. The seeds are light brown to black. They are kidney shaped and 3-4 mm long by 2 mm wide.

Distribution: It is a tropical plant that mostly grows naturally in open woodland on sandstone soils. It will grow in dry, acid and high aluminium soils that are infertile. It can grow in arid places.

Use: The tuberous roots are eaten raw or cooked. They can be boiled or roasted. The seeds are cooked and eaten.

Cultivation: Plants can be grown from seed or tubers.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
tuber	79.6	302	2.1	-	11.6	0.8	0.5
root	68.9	287	2.3	-	-	10.0	1.7

Image accessed from: http://farm3.static.flickr.com/2347/1651731806_c282f57a3c.jpg%3Fv%3D0

Starchy staples

Common name: Nut grass

Local:

Scientific name: *Cyperus rotundus*

Plant family: CYPERACEAE

Description: A sedge. It is a herb that continues growing from year to year. It has both rhizomes and tubers under the ground. The leaves of this plant have a blunt tip and do not have a shoulder along the leaf. The leaves mostly grow from the base of the plant. They are narrow and flat and 5-20 cm long. The flower is a compound flower with 5 leafy bracts near the base of the flower. These are of different lengths. The flower stem is 3-angled and 20-50 cm high. The fruit are 3 angled and brown. They are about 1.5 mm long. The tubers of this species are dark brown, in a chain and have a bitter or unpleasant taste.

Distribution: A tropical plant. It occurs world-wide in warmer places. In Papua New Guinea it grows up to 1800 m altitude. In Nepal it grows between 300-2400 m altitude. It grows in moist places. It can grow in most soil types and most pH levels. It cannot tolerate salt or shade. It can grow in arid places.

Use: The tubers are eaten fresh. They are also roasted or boiled and can be dried and made into flour. The bases of the culms are cooked and eaten. **Caution:** All parts of the plant can contain poisonous cyanide (the bitter taste) so must be well heated before eating.

Cultivation: Plants are grown by seed or tuberous rhizomes. Seeds often do not grow. Rhizomes and tubers are more common methods of reproduction.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
bulb	53.3	750	1.9	-	2	5.8	1.4

Image sourced from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyperus_rotundus



Starchy staples

English: Bottle gourd

Local:

Scientific name: *Lagenaria siceraria*

Plant family: CUCURBITACEAE

Description: A pumpkin family plant. It is an annual vine with large leaves. It can grow 3-9 m long and spread 3-6 m wide. The thick stems have furrows along them. It can climb over logs by attaching the tendrils which grow out of the stem near the leaf. The leaves are large and have soft hairs especially underneath. Flowers of both sexes are borne in the same plant. The plant produces male flowers first and these are on long stalks. Next it produces female flowers on short stalks. Flowers are large and white. They can be 10 cm across. They are mainly pollinated by insects. Fruit vary in shape and can be 8-90 cm long. They have brown seeds in a whitish green pulp. There are several varieties.



Distribution: A tropical plant that grows from sea level up to 2700 m altitude in the tropics. It grows best in a warm humid climate. It is sensitive to frost and prefers full sunlight. It grows best with a night temperature of 17-23°C and day temperatures of 28-36°C.

Use: The young fruit are boiled as a vegetable. The skin and seeds are removed and can also be steamed, fried or pickled. Young tips and leaves are edible. They are often cooked with milk or coconut milk to improve the flavour. They are also mixed with other edible leaves. The seeds are sometimes eaten and provide an edible oil. Old fruit are used as containers, and the seeds are not normally edible.

Cultivation: To achieve fast and uniform emergence, seed should be soaked overnight. Seeds are best sown in raised beds. Seedlings emerge in 5-7 days. Seedlings can be transplanted if required. Because plants cross pollinate, plant and fruit types vary. Removing the young fruit to use as a vegetable will prolong the life of the plant. Large fruit can be obtained by removing some of the small fruit. A spacing of 1-2 m is suitable. It prefers a trellis to climb. Because it is shallow rooted, weeding needs to be done carefully.

Production: It is fast growing and flowers 2 months after seeding.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
bean (dry)	3.2	2399	28.2	-	-	5.3	-
leaf	83.0	180	4.4	66	-	7.4	-
fruit	93.0	88	0.5	25	10	2.4	-

Starchy staples

English: Sweet potato

Local:

Scientific name: *Ipomoea batatas*

Plant family: CONVOLVULACEAE

Description: This is a root crop which produces long creeping vines. The leaves are carried singly along the vine. Leaves can vary considerably from divided like fingers on a hand, to being entire and rounded or heart shaped. Purple trumpet shaped flowers grow at the end of the vine. Fattened tubers are produced under the ground. There are a large number of varieties which vary in leaf shape and colour, tuber shape, colour, texture and in several other ways.



Distribution: A tropical and subtropical plant. They grow from sea level up to about 2700 m altitude in the tropics. Plants can grow with a wide range of rainfall patterns and in different soils. Plants are killed by frost and can't stand water-logging. Plants grow well with temperatures between 21-26°C. It can grow with a pH between 5.2-6.8. Sweet potato are not tolerant to shading. It suits hardiness zones 9-12.

Use: Tubers are boiled or baked. They can be steamed, fried, mashed or dried. They can be fermented into alcoholic drinks. They can also be used in pies, cakes, puddings and candies and jams. They can be used in noodles. The chopped and dried tubers can be boiled with rice or ground into flour and mixed with wheat flour to make cakes or bread. The young leaves are edible.

Cultivation: Vine cuttings are used for planting. In grassland soils it is grown in mounds, ridges or other raised beds. In bush fallow, it is mostly planted in undug loose soils. It needs a sunny position. Tubers won't form if the ground is waterlogged when tubers start to develop. Sweet potato is grown by cuttings of the vine. About 33000 cuttings are required per hectare. These weigh about 500 kg. Vine lengths of about 30 cm are optimum. As long as the vine is adequately inserted in the soil, the length of vine inserted does not significantly affect yield. Fresh sweet potato seeds germinate relatively easily and lead to continuous production of new cultivars under tropical conditions. Excess nitrogen restricts storage root initiation and therefore excess leaves are produced without significant tuber yield. Dry matter percentage increases with increasing age of the crop. Higher dry matter tubers are normally preferred.

Sweet potato are not tolerant to shading. Under shaded conditions, both foliage growth and storage root production are decreased. Some cultivars can be selected for increased production under mild shade but not heavy shade. The survival of cuttings at planting is also reduced under shaded conditions. Under shaded conditions, plant become more climbing and with fewer, larger leaves. With increasing shade, fewer tubers are produced and these grow more slowly. Sweet potato tends to be responsive to potassium fertiliser. Cultivars are often selected for yield under low fertility conditions.

Under lowland conditions in the tropics sweet potato tubers undergo active tuber enlargement from 6-16 weeks. Weed control is essential especially during early stages of growth. The rate of ground coverage by foliage varies greatly with growing conditions and cultivar, but once ground

coverage has occurred, weed control is less of a problem. Sweet potato tuber initiation is subject to aeration in the soil. Either heavy clay soils, waterlogged conditions or other factors reducing aeration can result in poor tuber production. For this reason, sweet potatoes are often grown on mounded beds. In well drained or high organic matter soils, digging or mounding is not as essential. Leaf scab (*Elsinoe batatas*) can significantly reduce yield especially in sites where leaf production is low due to low soil fertility. To reduce sweet potato weevil damage, plants need to be hilled or have the tubers well covered with soil. Cracking soils can allow the weevil access to tubers.

Production: The time to maturity ranges from 5 months to 12 months depending on the variety planted and the altitude at which it is being grown. Yields range from 6-23 t/ha.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
tuber (baked)	72.9	431	1.7	961	24.6	0.5	0.3
tuber (raw)	70.0	387	1.2	709	25	0.7	0.4
tuber (boiled)	72.0	363	1.1	787	15	0.6	0.3
leaf	86.3	168	3.9	105	58	2.9	-

Legumes

English: Pigeon pea

Local:

Scientific name: *Cajanus cajan*

Plant family: FABACEAE

Description: An upright perennial shrubby legume that can live for 3-4 years. They can grow up to 4 m tall and spread to 1.5 m wide. It has a bushy appearance and a strong deep taproot. The root nodules are round and sometimes lobed. The leaf consists of 3 narrow, green leaflets which are silvery-green underneath. The end leaflet is larger with a longer leaf stalk. The pea shaped flowers are red and yellow and occur on branched flower stalks which stick upwards in the axils of leaves. Pods are long, straight and narrow, often with 4-8 seeds.



Seeds vary in shape, size and colour. The pods are slightly hairy. Pods are often 4-8 cm long and have a beak at the end. Pods are constricted between the seeds. Many varieties of pigeon pea occur. Some are dwarf and day length neutral.

Distribution: A tropical plant that requires a tropical or subtropical climate. Plants grow from sea level up to about 1800 m in the tropics. They can tolerate drought and are suited to a drier climate. They can grow in places with less than 600 mm rainfall per year. They do less well in the wet tropics. They suffer in waterlogged soils and are damaged by frost. It can also tolerate heat. It will grow on poor soils cannot grow on salty soils. It can grow in arid places and suits hardiness zones 10-12.

Use: Young leaves, shoots and pods are eaten. The pods can be used in curries. The leaves and shoots as potherbs. Young seeds are cooked and eaten like peas. Ripe seeds are also cooked and eaten in soups and curries. Bean sprouts can be produced and eaten. Preparation of the seeds for dahl is somewhat complicated.

Cultivation: They are grown from seeds. It is best to sow seeds where the plants are to grow. Seeds normally germinate easily and well. Before sowing seed it helps to soak them in cold water for one day. Seeds store well if kept cool and dry. A spacing of 1.5 m x 1.5 m is suitable. Plants can be cut back and allowed to re-grow. Plants can also be grown from cuttings.

Production: Plants are fast growing. Pods are ready after 5 months. Mature seeds take about 8 months. Plants will often live for 3-4 years. Plants are cross pollinated by insects, or self pollinated.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
seed	10.0	1449	19.5	55	-	15.0	-
pod (young)	64.4	477	8.7	-	-	2.0	-
seed (young, boiled)	71.8	464	6.0	2	28.1	1.6	0.8

Legumes

English: Jack bean

Local:

Scientific name: *Canavalia ensiformis*

Plant family: FABACEAE

Description: A perennial climber, although short kinds do occur. Often it is a more bushy plant than the sword bean. Plants grow up to 1.5 m long. Stems can be hairy. Leaves have 3 leaflets. The leaflets are oval and 5.7-20 cm long by 3.2-11.5 cm wide. The leaf tends to be wedge shaped at the base. The leaf stalks are 2.5-11 cm long. Flowers are red/purple. They occur on flower clusters 5-12 cm long and with flower cluster stalks which are 10-34 cm long. The individual flower stalks are 2-5 mm long. Pods are long and sword shaped. Pods can be 15-35 cm long. Seeds are white with a light brown hilum half as long as the seed. Seeds are 2 cm long, by 1 cm across.

Distribution: It grows in tropical and subtropical places. It requires a fairly high temperature (15-30°C). It will possibly grow up to 900 m altitude. It is fairly drought resistant and also has some resistance to water-logging and salt in the soil. It can tolerate shade. It can tolerate pH from 4.5-8.0 but does best at about 6.1. The optimum mean annual temperature is 14.4-27.8°C. Seed germinate between 24-27.5°C. It is a short day plant growing well with a day length of 10-12 hours of sunlight. It can grow in arid places.



Use: The leaves and top shoots are eaten. The very young pods are boiled and eaten. The flowers can be eaten. The young seeds are eaten boiled, roasted, or peeled and cooked. The seeds are also fermented. The ripe seeds are roasted and used as a coffee substitute. **Caution:** The ripe seeds can contain poison and need to be well cooked and the water changed before eating. They are also often left under running water or fermented.

Cultivation: It is grown from seeds. Seeds need to be 2 cm deep. A spacing of about 60 cm is suitable. Plants preferably need a support to climb over. It benefits from a fertile soil but adding nitrogen depresses yield.

Production: Green pods are produced in 3-4 months, but ripe seeds need 6-9 months. Yield of seeds can range from 700-5400 kg/ha.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
seed	10.0	1423	20.4	160	-	4.9	-
pod (fresh)	88.0	155	2.4	-	-	-	-

Legumes

English: Guar bean

Scientific name: *Cyamopsis tetragonolobus*

Local:

Plant family: FABACEAE

Description: An upright bushy plant often only 1 m tall. Some kinds grow to 3 m. The branches are stiff and usually with white hairs. The branches stick upwards and are angled and with grooves. The leaves are produced alternately and have 3 leaflets. The leaflets are oval and with slight saw teeth around the edge. The leaf stalks have grooves. The flowers are small in clusters in the axils of leaves. The flowers are white with pink wings. It produces clusters of thick fleshy pods. They are stiff and straight. There is a double ridge along the top of the pod and a single one below. There are also 2 ridges along the flat sides. The pods have a beak at the end. There are 8-10 small oval seeds inside.



Distribution: A tropical plant. It is a hardy, drought resistant plant that suits dry areas. It grows well on alluvial and sandy soils and in areas with high summer temperatures and low rainfall. It can tolerate an alkaline soil with pH 7.5-8.

Use: The green immature pods are eaten cooked. They are added to curries. They can be fried in oil, salted or dried for later use. The seeds are eaten. The seeds contain a gum used as a thickening agent. It is used in ice cream, baked goods, gluten free foods and salad dressing. The sprouted seeds are also eaten.

Cultivation: They are grown from seed, often in mixed cropping situations. It requires 15-24 kg of seed to sow a hectare. Seeds are sown 2-3 cm deep. They are often put 20-30 cm apart in rows 65 cm apart. Seeds germinate within one week.

Production: Plants mature in 3-3.5 months.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
seed	9.9	1452	30.5	-	-	-	-
pod (fresh)	82.0	-	3.7	198	49	5.8	-

Legumes

English: Hausa groundnut

Local:

Scientific name: *Macrotyloma geocarpum*

Plant family: FABACEAE

Description: An annual herb. The 10 cm long stems lie along the ground and form roots. The leaves are alternate and have 3 leaflets. The leaf stalk is erect and 25 cm long. The leaflets are 3-8 cm long by 2-2.5 cm wide. The flowers can be single or in pairs in the axils of leaves. The flowers are greenish white. The fruit are pods 0.5-2.5 cm long by 0.5-1 cm wide. These are forced into the ground as they develop. The pods contain 1 to 3 kidney shaped beans. The seeds are 5-10 mm long by 4-7 mm wide.



Distribution: A tropical plant that can grow in arid places. It grows in the drier regions of West Africa.

Use: The seeds are cooked and eaten. They are boiled with salt and eaten with palm oil. They are also boiled in soup. Dried seeds are ground into flour and made into cakes and other dishes. The leaves are also cooked and eaten.

Cultivation: Plants are grown from seeds. Plants are often intercropped.

Production: Pods are harvested and then dried in the sun. The seeds are then thrashed from the pods. Yields of dry seeds can be 500 kg per hectare.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
seed	9.0	1461	19.4	-	-	15.0	-

Image sourced from: https://storage.googleapis.com/powop-assets/PPA/1275_1299/h1285f_fullsize.jpg

Legumes

English: Lablab bean

Local:

Scientific name: *Lablab purpureus*

Plant family: FABACEAE

Description: A climbing bean which can have vines 1-5 m long. It keeps growing from year to year. The stems can be smooth or hairy. Leaves are made up of 3 almost triangular leaflets. The leaflets are 5-15 cm long and 3-14 cm wide. The side leaflets are somewhat asymmetrical. Often the plants are flushed purple. The flowering clusters are 5-20 cm long. Flowers are often white but can vary from red to blue. The pods are flattened, pointed and up to 12 cm long and 2 cm wide. They can be green, purple or white. Inside there are 3-5 white or dark seeds. Seed pods have a wavy margin. The seeds are 0.5-1.5 cm long. (This bean is similar to Lima bean but the keel of the flower is not spirally twisted, the pod ends more bluntly with a long thin style at the end and the hilum on the seed is longer.)



Distribution: It is a tropical and subtropical plant. It mostly grows between 750 m and 2175 m altitude in the tropics. It is drought resistant and can grow in quite low rainfall areas. Some varieties are short day and some are long day kinds. It suits hardiness zones 9-12.

Use: The young pods, ripe seeds and young leaves are edible, cooked. Flowers can be eaten raw, steamed or added to soups and stews. Dried seeds can be cooked as a vegetable. The seeds can also be sprouted then crushed and cooked. The large starchy root is edible. **Caution:** Many types can be poisonous. They should be boiled and the cooking water thrown away.

Cultivation: Seeds are sown at 30 x 60 cm spacing near stakes or trees. About 20 kg of seed per hectare are required. Fertilising with nitrogen and potash until flowering is recommended.

Production: Young pods are ready 4-6 months after planting and seeds 6-8 months. Pods are often harvested over 2 or 3 years. Pollination and seed setting are reduced in cold weather.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
seed (dry)	10.0	1428	22.8	-	-	9.0	-
seed (young)	86.9	209	3.0	14	5.1	0.8	0.4
pod (fresh)	86.7	203	3.9	-	1.0	2.4	-

Legumes

English: Lima bean

Local:

Scientific name: *Phaseolus lunatus*

Plant family: FABACEAE

Description: A perennial climbing bean. It is often a tall, vigorously climbing plant which can keep growing for some years. The leaves are slightly rounded at the base and pointed at the tip. The flower is white or yellow. The keel of the flower is twisted which helps tell the difference between this bean and Lablab bean. The pods are long (10 cm), flattened and curved and have 3-4 seeds which are highly variable in colour. The seeds are large. The seeds have a short round hilum where the seed is attached to the pod. The seeds also have lines going out from this point across the bean seed.



Distribution: It suits warm and subtropical areas. In the tropics it is common from 500-2100 m altitude but grows to the limit of cultivation (2700 m). For germination it must have a soil temperature above 15.5°C and cannot withstand frost. In very hot weather seeds often do not set. It does best in a temperature range 14-21°C. It is sensitive to a pH less than 6. It can grow in arid places.

Use: The leaves, young pods and seeds are all eaten. The seeds are eaten fresh or after drying. They are also fried in oil. Dried beans are boiled or baked. They can be used in soups and stews. The seeds are sometimes grown as bean sprouts then cooked and eaten. **Caution:** Some kinds have poison (hydrocyanic acid). This is destroyed by thorough cooking. The beans contain a protein inhibitor but this is also destroyed by cooking.

Cultivation: It is grown from seed. Coloured seeds are often hard to get to grow but white seeded kinds start growing easily. Sow 3-4 seeds in a hill and put a stick 2-3 m tall in the middle. Hills should be about 1 m apart. Seeds should be 2-4 cm deep.

Production: Harvesting can begin after about 100 days. Dried beans can be stored for several months. Yields of 0.12kg of seed per square metre have been obtained. The yield of pods can be 1kg per square metre.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
seed	12.0	1407	19.8	-	-	5.6	-
seed (young, cooked)	67.2	515	6.8	37	10.1	2.5	0.8
seed (young, raw)	70.2	473	6.8	30	23.4	3.1	0.8

Legumes

English: Mung bean

Local:

Scientific name: *Vigna radiata*

Plant family: FABACEAE

Description: An upright hairy bean plant which can grow to 1 m tall. It has many branches. The leaves have 3 leaflets, are dark green and grow on long leaf stalks. There are oval stipules at the base of the leaf. Flowers are pale yellow and small. They occur in bunches of 10-20 on the ends of long hairy flower stalks. Pods are black and straight. They do not have a beak. Pods contain 10-20 seeds which are usually green or golden yellow. They are smaller than black gram. The beans can be black. They have a flat white hilum. There are 2000 varieties.



Distribution: A tropical and subtropical plant. The plant will grow from sea level up to about 2000 m in the tropics. It is drought resistant but can't stand water-logging. Plants are damaged by frost. They cannot stand salinity. Rainfall at flowering is detrimental. It requires a deep soil. Both short day and long day varieties occur. It can grow where annual temperatures are from 8-28°C. It can tolerate a pH from 4.3-8.1. It suits a drier climate and can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 10-11.

Use: Seeds are eaten ripe, raw or roasted. They are added to soups and stews. They are also fermented. Young pods and leaves can be eaten. The seeds can be germinated for sprouts and used in salads and stir-fried dishes. The seeds are ground and used for starch to make noodles.

Cultivation: Plants are grown from seed. In some areas these are broadcast while for small plots often 2-3 seeds are sown in holes 50-60 cm apart. Seeding rates of 6-22 kg per ha are used in different locations. It normally requires phosphorus fertiliser for adequate growth. Seeds germinate in 3-5 days.

Production: Green pods are ready after about 2 months and ripe pods may take another 1-2 months. For ripe beans the whole plant is harvested and dried before threshing. Yields of 450-560 kg/ha of seeds are common.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
seed	11.0	1432	22.9	55	4	7.1	-
seed (cooked)	-	439	7.0	2.4	1.0	1.4	-
seed (sprouted)	90.4	126	3.0	2	13.2	0.9	0.4

Legumes

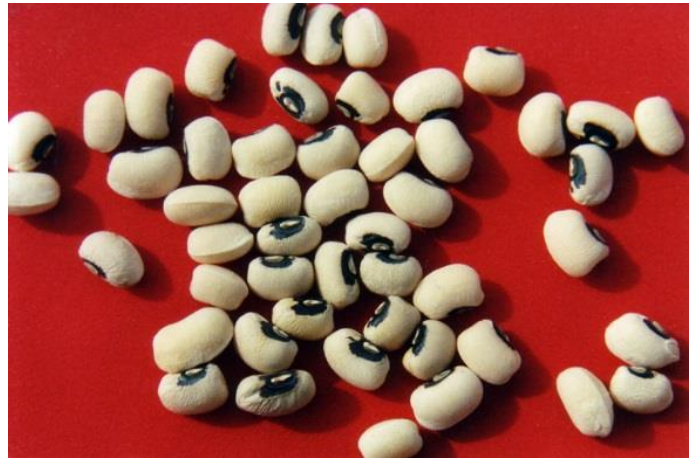
English: Cowpea

Local:

Scientific name: *Vigna unguiculata*

Plant family: FABACEAE

Description: A creeping bean type plant with straight firm pods. There is a deep tap root and many branches occur from it in the surface of the soil. The root nodules are large and round. The leaves have 3 leaflets. The end leaflet can be 12-16 cm long. The side leaflets are asymmetrical. The stipules at the base of the leaf are large and with spurs at their base. Flowers occur often in pairs on the end of long flowering shoots. Only 2-4 flowers in each stalk produce pods. Flowers are white, yellow or blue. They are large and showy. The pods are about 15 cm long. The seeds are white except for a dark scar.



Distribution: It grows in tropical and subtropical climates. It grows from sea level to 1800 m altitude in the tropics. Plants can stand high temperatures. Some kinds can tolerate drought. They are sensitive to cold and killed by frost. Plants germinate with a temperature between 11.5-15.5°C. The best growth occurs between 20-35°C. They can grow on a range of soils providing they are well drained. They are a short day plant. They do well in the semiarid tropics. It will not tolerate acid or alkaline soils. It grows in areas with an annual rainfall between 280-410 mm. It can grow in arid places.

Use: The young leaves, young pods and ripe seeds are all eaten. They can be steamed, boiled, stir-fried etc. The leaves can be dried and stored. The dried seeds are used in soups and stews. They are ground into flour or fermented. The seeds are also used for bean sprouts. Roasted seeds are used as a coffee substitute.

Cultivation: It is grown from seeds. Seeds remain viable for several years if carefully stored. A seeding rate of about 20 kg per ha is suitable and seed are sometimes broadcast then thinned.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
seed (dry)	11.2	1189	23.5	-	1.5	6.4	-
seed (young, boiled)	75.5	406	3.2	79	2.2	1.1	1.0
leaf	88.4	143	4.2	36	35	4.7	0.3
young pod + seed (boiled)	89.5	142	2.6	45	17.0	0.7	0.2
leaf (boiled)	91.3	92	4.7	29	18	1.1	0.2

Leafy greens

English: Vegetable kenaf

Local:

Scientific name: *Hibiscus cannabinus*

Plant family: MALVACEAE

Description: A herb that can grow from seed each year, or keep growing from year to year. It grows up to 3.5 m tall. It has a few sharp spines. The leaf stalk is 6-20 cm long. The leaf blade has 2 forms. The leaves lower on the stem are heart shaped and those higher on the stem have 4-7 lobes arranged like fingers on a hand. These lobes are sword shaped and 2-12 cm long by 0.6-2 cm wide. They have teeth around the edge and taper at the tip. The flowers are yellow, white or ivory and red at the base. They occur singly in the axils of leaves. They are large and up to 10 cm across. They have very short stalks. The fruit is a capsule about 1.5 cm across. The seeds are kidney shaped.



Distribution: A tropical plant. It can grow in well-drained sandy soils and in dry but seasonally waterlogged places. It grows from 1500-2100 m above sea level. It grows in areas with an annual rainfall of 500-635 mm. It can grow in arid places and suits hardiness zones 10-12. It grows in many African and Asian countries.

Use: The leaves are eaten cooked as a vegetable. They are also used as a substitute for tamarind for curries. They are used in soups. The leaves are cooked with the aid of potashes. The seeds are roasted and eaten. They are also fermented. The seeds yield an edible oil. The flowers are eaten cooked as a vegetable. The bark is sweet and is chewed by children.

Cultivation: It is usually grown from seeds but can be grown from cuttings. Seeds will last for about 8 months. Seeds germinate best at 35°C.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
seed (dry)	8.1	1785	20.2	-	-	-	-
leaf	79.0	280	5.5	34	-	12.1	-

Leafy greens

Common name: Flower-of-an-hour

Local:

Scientific name: *Hibiscus trionum*

Plant family: MALVACEAE

Description: An annual herb. It can be erect or lie over. It is 25-70 cm high. The leaves are alternate. The leaf stalk is 2-4 cm long. The leaf blade has 3-5 lobes arranged like fingers on a hand. The leaf blade is 3-6 cm across. The central lobe is longer. The leaf blade is covered with coarse star like hairs. The flowers occur singly in the axils of leaves. They are yellow and purple at the base. They are like a Hibiscus flower. The fruit is a capsule which is about 1 cm across. It is a hairy five celled capsule. There are many black seeds.



Distribution: It suits tropical, subtropical and temperate regions. It does best in a sunny position. It does not occur in hot humid tropical rain forest zones. It suits drier warmer places. It can grow in hot arid zones with a marked dry season. It grows up to 2635 m above sea level. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

Use: The shoots and leaves are cooked and eaten. The pods are used in soups and stews. The pods are sun-dried and powdered and used later in food in Sudan. The seeds are eaten raw and have a sesame flavour.

Cultivation: Plants can be grown from seed or cuttings.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
leaf	6.3	1263	26.7	-	-	79.8	5.7
shoot	-	-	21.0	-	-	21.8	9.4

Image accessed from: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/29/a5/c2/29a5c2c4457308d0fc36439ee5e26310.jpg>

Leafy greens

English: Goat's horns

Local:

Scientific name: *Sida cordifolia*

Plant family: MALVACEAE

Description: An erect, woody shrub that grows about 0.4-1 m high. It keeps growing from year to year. It is covered with short and long hairs that make the plant feel soft. The leaf stalk is 1-2.5 cm long. The leaves are one after the other and heart shaped at the base. They are toothed at the edge and 1.5-4.5 cm long. The flowers are yellow and occur in the axils of the leaves. The fruit are about 6-8 mm across and have 20 fine bristles on the top.



Distribution: A tropical plant that grows in open waste places in the tropics and sub-tropics. It is common and widely distributed in the Philippines.

It grows in hot arid places with a marked dry season. It grows in places with an annual rainfall below 520 mm. It grows in dry sandy soils and can grow in salty soils. It grows below 1100 m altitude. It can tolerate shade and can grow in arid places.

Use: The leaves are edible when cooked.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
leaf	6.6	1296	24.2	-	-	79.8	-

Image accessed from

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f4/Sida_cordifolia \(Bala\) in Hyderabad, AP W IMG_9420.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f4/Sida_cordifolia_(Bala)_in_Hyderabad,_AP_W_IMG_9420.jpg)

Leafy greens

English: Nettle tree

Local:

Scientific name: *Celtis integrifolia*

Plant family: ULMACEAE

Description: A large tree that grows to 25 m tall. The trunk is 1.5 m across and can have short buttresses. The branches occur low down. The bark is grey and smooth. The oval leaves are alternate and oblique, and taper to the tip. The twigs are green with white hairs. The flowers occur in clusters in the axils of leaves on one year old shoots. The fruit are oval, about 1 cm long, with one white seed.



Distribution: A tropical plant that grows in the Sahel in West Africa. It needs rainfall of 500-700 mm per year. It often grows in depressions and near waterholes. It can grow in arid places.

Use: The leaves are used in soups. Sometimes they are used with baobab leaves. Young leaves can be eaten in salads. The fresh fruit are eaten.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
leaf (dry)	10.8	1058	8.0	-	-	19.7	-

Image sourced from:

http://www.westafricanplants.senckenberg.de/images/pictures/Celtis_integrifolia_MS_1566_1790_39f3a2.JPG

Leafy greens

Common name: Coffee senna

Local:

Scientific name: *Senna occidentalis*

Plant family: FABACEAE

Description: An annual herb or small shrub. It can continue growing for a few years. It grows 1-2.5 m high. The stems have few hairs. The leaf stalk has a gland at the base but there is no gland along the leaf axis. The leaves are compound. There are 4-6 pairs of leaflets. The leaf stalk is 2-3 cm long. The leaflets are oval and 4-12 cm long by 1.5-4 cm wide. They taper to the top and are rounded at the base. The flower stalks are very short. The flower cluster is in the axils of leaves. The petals are yellow and 0.9-1.5 cm long. The fruit is a narrow, slightly curved pod. It is 5-10 cm long by 0.5-1 cm wide. It has pale edges. They are flattened. They usually dry with a brown area along the pod. The seeds are compressed. There are 28-32 seeds inside. They are green or brown and 5 mm long. There are small pits on each side.



Distribution: A tropical plant. It grows in monsoon forest as well as arid areas. In Africa it grows up to 2400 m altitude. It can grow in acid, neutral or alkaline soils. It can grow in arid places. Temperatures which average 12.5-28°C are suitable. It grows in areas with rainfalls between 500 and 4000 mm per year. A rainfall of 500 to 1000 mm is enough.

Use: The seeds are roasted and used for coffee. (They contain no caffeine). **Caution:** The seeds are poisonous unless roasted. Young leaves and young seeds are eaten cooked. The leaves are added to soups. The unripe pods are cooked and eaten with rice. The ashes of the pods are used as food salt.

Cultivation:

Production:

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
leaf (dry)	10.0	-	31.7	-	-	3.1	-
leaf	84.9	205	5	-	17.9	12.7	-

Image accessed from: <https://tse1.mm.bing.net/th?id=OIP.wjO-VnTA1RQngZQ4Illp9wHaFe&pid=Api>

Leafy greens

Common name: Rocket

Local:

Scientific name: *Eruca vesicaria* subsp. *sativa*

Plant family: BRASSICACEAE

Description: A cabbage family herb. It is an annual plant. It grows to a height of 1 m and spreads to 0.5 m across. It has a taproot. The stem is erect and slender with few branches. The leaves are bright green and occur opposite each other. The leaves have deep lobes. The flowers are white or pale yellow with purple veins. There are 4 petals. The fruit are 1-4.5 cm long. They are beaked and erect. There are many seeds which are round and 1-2 mm across.



Distribution: It is native to Mediterranean regions. It will grow on most well-drained soils. It prefers an open, sunny position. It is drought and frost resistant. It can grow on poor soils and with low rainfall. It suits hardiness zones 7-10. In the tropics it grows up to 2100 m altitude. It can grow in arid places.

Use: The young leaves are used as a salad vegetable. They are tender, bitter and slightly mustard flavoured. Older leaves can be pureed and used in soups and sauces. The seeds are eaten or used in pickle and Persian mustard. The seeds can be used for edible oil. The flowers are used as a garnish.

Cultivation: Plants are grown from seed. Seeds germinate in about 1 day at 25°C.

Production: It should be grown using high nitrogen levels to assist rapid growth and reduce bitterness. Leaves are picked before flowering to give a milder taste. Leaves can be harvested after about 3-4 weeks.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
seed	6.3	2023	17.8	-	-	-	-
leaf	91.7	105	2.6	35	15.0	1.5	1.5

Image sourced from: <https://www.biolib.cz/IMG/GAL/423774.jpg>

Leafy greens

English: Spreading pigweed

Local:

Scientific name: *Amaranthus graecizans*

Plant family: AMARANTHACEAE

Description: An annual plant that grows up to 50 cm high. The plant sprawls over the ground and has a taproot. The branches do not have hairs. The flowering shoots are leafy and the greenish flowers are in small clusters.



Distribution: It is a Mediterranean and tropical plant. In Ethiopia, it grows from 900-2380 m altitude. It can grow in arid places.

Use: The leaves and seeds are eaten cooked.

The seeds can be ground and made into flat bread. **Caution:** This plant can accumulate poisonous nitrates if grown with high nitrogen inorganic fertilisers. The plant will cause diarrhoea if eaten in large amounts.

Cultivation: Plants can be grown from seed if the soil is warm. Seeds are small and grow easily. They need to be planted near the soil surface. Cuttings of growing plants root easily.

Production: It grows after rain and the first leaves can be harvested after 12 days.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
leaf (dry)	6.3	903	26.1	-	-	9.8	5.0

Fruit

Common name: Grey leafed cordia

Local:

Scientific name: *Cordia sinensis*

Plant family: BORAGINACEAE

Description: A tangled shrub that loses its leaves during the year. It grows 3-12 m tall. It has many branches and these often droop over. The bark is grey and smooth when young. It later becomes dark and roughly grooved. The leaves are grey-green, narrow and oblong. They can be 9 cm long. They feel rough to touch and have hairs on both sides. The tip of the leaf is rounded. The leaf stalk is 1 cm long. Leaves are almost opposite. The flowers are small and like tubes and have a sweet smell. The flowers occur in clusters at the ends of branches. They grow on branched hairy stalks. The fruit is oval and 2 cm long. It has a tip at the end and is held in a cup of leaves (calyx). The fruit is orange-red and has a sticky edible pulp. There are 1-4 tiny seeds.



Distribution: A tropical plant that is widespread in Africa at low altitudes and in dry areas. It is more common in dry river beds. It can grow on sandy or salty soils. In Africa it grows from sea level to 1400 m above sea level. In Tanzania it grows in areas with a rainfall between 600-1000 mm. It can grow in arid places.

Use: The fruit are eaten raw. They are sweet and sticky. The skin is removed and the seeds are not eaten. They are added to porridge instead of sugar. The roots are eaten raw. The clear gum from the tree is edible. The fruit are fermented into beer.

Cultivation: It can be grown from seed or cuttings. Plants also grow naturally. There are 14000 seeds per kg. When seed are sown fresh, no treatment is necessary. For stored seed they should have warm water poured over them then be allowed to soak before being planted. Seed can be stored for 3 months at room temperature. It is best to plant seeds where they are to grow.

Production: It is a fairly slow-growing plant.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
fruit	8.8	2015	-	16.6	-	-	-

Image sourced from <https://alchetron.com/Cordia-sinensis>

Fruit

English: Date palm

Local:

Scientific name: *Phoenix dactylifera*

Plant family: ARECACEAE

Description: An unbranched, evergreen palm that grows to 30 m tall. The trunk can be 30-40 cm across. The trunk is covered with fibres and has the bases of old leaves along it. It produces suckers on the trunk and at the base. The fronds are grey-green. The leaves are 6-7 m long. The leaflets are 20-40 cm long. They are spaced in two irregular rows along each side of the stalk. Male and female flowers are produced on separate trees. The flowers spadices are yellow-brown. There are 1000-1500 fruit in a cluster. The fruit is small, brown and very sweet. It has one grooved seed. The fruit is 2.5-5 cm long. When ripe, the fruit is dull yellow and the flesh soft. The skins of the fruit darken when dried. Strands of fruit have 25-35 dates. The fruit are edible.



Distribution: They suit dry, subtropical climates. It needs hot, dry arid climates while fruit mature. It can tolerate salty or brackish water. It can also grow in alkaline soils but with reduced yields. In cold temperate regions the palm grows but rarely flowers. It does best in areas with long dry summers and sufficient heat for fruit to ripen. It should not have rain during flowering and fruit set. It needs 3400 heat units above 10°C for fruit to fully mature. It suits plant hardiness zones 9-12.

Use: The fruit is eaten fresh or dried. They are also used for jams and preserves. The date stones can be fermented or roasted and used as a coffee substitute. They can be pressed for oil. Dates are also pressed for juice. The sap is used for jaggery and sugar. The male flower can be eaten. The pollen is eaten.

Cultivation: Plants are grown from seed and take 4-5 months to germinate. They begin bearing 5-6 years after planting and reach full production by 15 years. A palm lasts about 80 years. Female plants need to be pollinated before they bear fruit. A single male is sufficient to pollinate 50 females. Taking suckers from good producing plants is a more reliable means of growing new plants. A well-established palm can give 8-18 good suckers over a 6 year period. These suckers should have some leaves cut off during transplanting. About 10% of plants should be male, for pollination. Selection of a good pollinator tree is important. Fruit thinning is often needed to give good sized fruit. Three to four bunches per tree are sufficient.

Production: Trees take about 6 years to reach good production. There can be 45-70 kg of fruit per tree. Trees continue to bear for 50 years.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
fruit (dry)	22.5	1151	2.0	5	-	1.2	0.3
fruit	58.5	598	0.9	50	6	1.3	-

Fruit

English: Indian jujube

Local:

Scientific name: *Ziziphus mauritiana*

Plant family: RHAMNACEAE

Description: A medium sized thorny tree that loses many of its leaves during the year. It grows up to 12 m tall. The bark is grey, brown or pale red. Branches and the under surface of the leaves are densely hairy when young. The thorns arise from the base of the leaves. The leaves are alternate and simple. They are finely toothed. They can be oval or round and 8 cm long by 5 cm wide. The flowers are green and have a scent. They occur as 3-5 flowers together. The flowers are 1-2 cm long and on slender branches.



The sweet fruit are small, oval and yellow or brown. They are 2-5 cm long and 2.5 cm wide. The fruit are green when young and turn yellow or brown when ripe. The pulp is fleshy, acid and edible. The fruit have one seed imbedded in the flesh in a hard stone. The fruit wrinkle on drying. Many varieties exist.

Distribution: A tropical plant that grows well on sandy soils. It can survive droughts. It grows rapidly in dry places such as the Sahel. It can tolerate temperatures up to 44°C as well as periodic frosts once the trees are mature. It grows best when the mean annual temperature is 22-30°C. It thrives in hot dry climates. It needs adequate water during the fruiting season. It can grow at elevations up to 1000 m in the tropics but does best below 600 m. It grows in areas with annual rainfall of 150-900 mm and is most common where annual rainfall is 300-500 mm. It does not like excessive humidity for fruiting. It will grow on a range of soils but deep sandy loams with a pH of 7 or slightly higher are best. It can tolerate some salinity and waterlogging and can grow in arid places. It grows in most tropical and sub-tropical countries.

Use: The fruit is eaten fresh, dried, in jelly or candied. They can be used in jellies, preserves, chutney, sauces, and drinks. The unripe fruit are pickled. Young leaves are cooked and eaten. They are also used in soups. Seed kernels are eaten. The roasted seeds are used as a coffee substitute. The fruit are used to make an alcoholic drink.

Cultivation: Plants are grown from seed. The hard seed coat makes them difficult to germinate. The shell can be carefully cracked and seed should be sown fresh. They can be soaked for 50 hours or put in concentrated sulphuric acid for 6 minutes to improve germination. Seed can be sown in plastic bags then transplanted after 18-24 weeks. It does not transplant easily so direct planting is best. Grafting can be used. It is also budded onto the rootstocks of wild species. Light pruning during the dry dormant season is recommended to train the tree. Regular pruning in the hot dry season encourages new growth. A spacing of 6-12 m is recommended. For larger fruit better varieties are grafted into rootstocks of *Ziziphus nummularia* or *Ziziphus jujuba*.

Production: A budded tree fruits after 4 years and produces for 50 years. Seedling trees take a year longer to fruit. Yields of 80-130 kg of fruit per tree per year occur. Fruit development takes 4-6 months. As fruit does not all ripen at once several harvests are needed. Unripe fruit do not ripen after picking.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
fruit	77.0	360	0.8	21	71	0.4	0.4
fruit (dry)	17.4	1201	4.3	-	-	-	-

Fruit

English: Boabab

Local:

Scientific name: *Adansonia digitata*

Plant family: BOMBACACEAE

Description: A large tree. It grows up to 25 m tall. It loses its leaves during the year. The branches are thick, angular and spread out wide. The trunk is short and stout and can be 10-14 m around. Often the trunk has deep grooves or is fluted. The bark is smooth and grey but can be rough and wrinkled. The leaves spread out like fingers on a hand. There are 5-9 leaflets. Often the leaves are crowded near the ends of branches. The flowers are large and 12-15 cm across. The petals are white and the stamens are purple. The fruit hangs singly on a long stalk. The fruit has a woody shell. This can be 20-30 cm long and 10 cm across. Inside the fruit are hard brown seeds. They are about 15 mm long. The seeds are in a yellow white floury pulp. The pulp is edible. The thick roots end in fattened tubers.



Distribution: It is a tropical plant that grows in the lowlands. It grows in the hot dry regions of tropical Africa, such as the Sahel. It survives well in dry climates. It grows where rainfall is 100-1000 mm a year. It can tolerate fire. It grows where the annual temperatures are 20-30°C. In most places it grows below 900 m altitude but occasionally grows to 1500 m altitude. It requires good drainage. It can grow in arid places and suits hardiness zones 11-12.

Use: The young leaves are eaten as a cooked vegetable. The dried leaves are also used to thicken soups. The fruit pulp is eaten raw. It is also used for a drink. The flowers are eaten raw or cooked. The seeds can be eaten fresh or dried and ground into flour then added to soups. They yield a cooking oil. The shoots of germinating seeds are eaten. The young tender roots are eaten. The fattened root tubers are cooked and eaten. The bark is eaten and the dried leaves are used as flavouring.

Cultivation: Trees are grown from seed. The seed remain viable for several years but before planting the seeds must be treated to break the hard seed coat, by soaking the seeds in hot water for several minutes or by cutting the seed coat. Seeds that float in water should not be used. Seeds can be planted in nurseries in plastic bags then transplanted after 6 months. Plants can also be grown from cuttings.

Production: Trees grow quickly reaching 2 m in 2 years. Trees produce fruit after 2-15 years. The plant is pollinated by bats, insects and winds. Trees can last 600 or more years. Fruit can be stored for about a year.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
nut (dry)	7.8	1832	33.7	-	-	13.9	-
fruit	16.0	1212	2.2	-	360	7.4	6.7
leaf	77.0	290	3.8	-	50	-	-

Fruit

English: Carandas plum

Local:

Scientific name: *Carissa edulis*

Plant family: APOCYNACEAE

Description: A shrub or small tree that grows 1.5-5 m tall. It has green straggly branches. There are many spines 10-40 mm long. The spines are simple. The leaves are opposite one another. They have short stalks. The leaves are leathery and widest below the middle. The flowers are white and pink. They are in the shape of a tube and 18 mm long. They are crowded in the axils of leaves. The fruit occur as berries in pairs. They are round and about 1 cm across. They are waxy and dark red when ripe. They have red sweet pulp. The fruit are edible.



Distribution: It is a tropical plant that grows in semi-arid lowlands and in the highlands. They occur in regions with temperatures in the range 14-22°C. They occur from sea level to 2400 m but are more common at 800-1200 m altitude. It is damaged by frost but resistant to drought. They will grow on most soils. In Tanzania it grows in areas with a rainfall of 1000-2100 mm. They do not do well in wet areas. It can grow in arid places. It often grows on termite mounds. It suits hardiness zones 10-11.

Use: The fruit are eaten raw especially by children. They can be made into jam. The fruit are fermented into wine or vinegar. The roots are eaten as a boiled vegetable. They are used as a spice. The leaves are used as a pot herb.

Cultivation: Plants can be grown from seed or cuttings. For hedges they are planted at between 1 and 2 m apart and pruned to 1-1.5 m high. Seedlings need watering. Seeds are best sown in a nursery and then transplanted. Plants can be used as a hedge and pruned.

Production: Fruit reaches maturity 4 months after flowering. Fruit are collected during the dry season. Fruit are harvested off the tree.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
fruit	87.3	1745	9.2	-	-	-	-

Image accessed from

http://www.westafricanplants.senckenberg.de/images/pictures/apoc_carissa_edulis_rvbli0599_7_277_bca621.jpg

Fruit

English: Emblic

Local:

Scientific name: *Phyllanthus emblica*

Plant family: PHYLLANTHACEAE

Description: A small deciduous tree. It grows 2-20 m tall. The trunk is bent and has many branches. The branches are spreading. The bark is greyish-brown and peels off in flakes. The leaves are pale green and feathery. New leaves are pinkish. The leaves have short stalks. The leaves are 1-1.5 cm long by 0.2-0.3 cm wide. The leaves are arranged on slender branches to appear like feathery compound leaves. They are like tamarind leaves. Male and female flowers occur on different trees. The flowers are small and yellow. They are densely clustered on the branches. The fruit are small and yellow to green. They are 2 cm across and edible. They have 6-8 faint lines along them. They are fleshy and edible. They are sour. Some improved kinds have fruit 8-9 cm across.



Distribution: A tropical plant. It suits the hot humid tropical lowlands. It is native to tropical Asia. It grows in arid bushy savannah. It grows to 1500 m altitude. It often grows on poor shallow soils. It is light demanding and drought tolerant. It can tolerate forest fires. They are common in tropical deciduous forest in India. It suits the subtropics. It needs warm temperatures at time of flower bud formation. Dry times during fruiting cause fruit to drop. It can tolerate low and high temperatures once established. It can tolerate soils with a pH 6-10. Some varieties can tolerate saline soils.

Use: The fruit are cooked and used in preserves. The fruit are acid and can be eaten fresh or used for flavouring. They are also used as a seasoning in cooked food. They are pickled and made into jams, jellies, preserves, tarts and other foods. The dried fruit chips are seasoned with caraway seeds, salt and yoghurt and eaten. Unripe seeds and leaves are edible.

Cultivation: Plants are grown from seed. They are best grown using ring budding or veneer grafting. Trees can be pruned to form 4-6 branches from one trunk. They can be grown from cuttings, grafting or by air layering.

Production: Early growth is fast. Some budded trees produce fruit after 3 years. Seedling trees take 7-8 years. Best yields are produced after 10-12 years and trees can keep bearing for 70-75 years. In India fruit are available October to December.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
fruit	78.4	281	0.6	-	316	0.9	0.5

Fruit

English: Guava

Local:

Scientific name: *Psidium guajava*

Plant family: MYRTACEAE

Description: A small evergreen tree 8-10 m tall with smooth, mottled bark which peels off in flakes. It is shallow rooted and branches close to the ground. The branches are four-angled. The leaves are opposite, dull green, and somewhat hairy. They are oval and somewhat pointed at both ends, 15 cm long by 2-5 cm wide with short leaf-stalks. The showy flowers are white and borne in loose, irregular arrangements of 1-3 flowers that grow in the axils of leaves on new growth. The petals are 1.5-2 cm long.



Both self and cross-pollination occurs. The fruit are rounded and 4-5 cm long. They are green, turning yellow when ripe. The skin is firm and encloses a pink, or nearly white, sweet-smelling, edible pulp with many seeds. In better selected varieties, the skin and the seeds are fully edible. Fruit vary from very acid to very sweet.

Distribution: A native to Central and South America, it grows in most tropical countries. Guava thrives in humid and dry tropical climates and does best in sunny positions. It is killed by frost and fruits better where there is a cooler season. Temperatures near 30°C are best. It grows in open areas and secondary forests, and can become weedy in some conditions. It prefers a well-drained soil with good organic matter, but can stand brief water-logging. A soil pH of 5-7 is best, but can tolerate a pH from 4.6-8.9. Trees cannot tolerate salty conditions. It suits hardiness zones 9-12.

Use: The fruit are eaten raw and can be used for jams and jellies. Half-ripe fruit are added to help the jelly set. The young leaves are eaten raw or cooked. It is an attractive and nutritious fruit.

Cultivation: They are mostly grown from seed but seedling trees vary in quality. Seeds remain viable for a year or longer, and usually germinate in 2-3 weeks, but can take 8 weeks. Trees can be propagated by budding or grafting, and by layering, root cuttings or stem cuttings if hormones are used. Tips are used for stem cuttings and grown under mist at 28-30°C with bottom heat. Suckers can be used. Vegetative propagation preserves better fruit types. Trees self-sow in the lowland tropics. As fruit are produced on new season's growth, pruning does not greatly affect fruiting. Trees should be managed to give the maximum number of vigorous, new shoots and can be pruned for shape. Trees can be grown at 2.5 m within rows and 6 m apart between rows.

Production: Seedling trees begin to bear 2-3 years after transplanting. Pruning back the tips slightly increases fruit production. Tree-ripened fruit taste best. Ripening after picking can be hastened by placing them in a brown paper bag with a banana or apple. Mature fruit which have not changed colour can be stored 2-5 weeks at temperatures of 8-10°C and relative humidity of 85-95%. Mature fruit ripen in 2-3 days at normal temperatures and will keep for 7 days.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
fruit	77.1	238	1.1	60	184	1.4	0.2

Vegetables

English: Okra

Local:

Scientific name: *Abelmoschus esculentus*

Plant family: MALVACEAE

Description: A tropical annual herb that grows erect, often with hairy stems. It mostly grows about 1 m tall but can be 3.5 m tall. It becomes woody at the base. The leaves have long stalks up to 30 cm long. Leaves vary in shape but are roughly heart shaped with lobes and teeth along the edge. Upper leaves are more deeply divided than lower ones. The flowers are yellow with red hearts. The fruits are green, long and ribbed. The seeds are 4-5 mm across. They are round and dark green.



Distribution: A tropical plant that suits the hot humid tropical lowlands but is unsuited to the highlands. It is very sensitive to frost. It can grow in salty soils. It grows best where temperatures are 20-36°C. It can grow well in dry climates with irrigation. It suits hot humid environments. It does best on well drained well manured soils but will grow on many soils. A soil pH of 5.5-7.0 is best.

Use: Pods are eaten cooked. They are slimy, but less so if fried. Dried powdered seeds can be used in soups as a thickener. They can also be pickled. Young leaves can be eaten cooked. They can be dried and stored. Flowers can also be eaten. Okra is frozen and canned. The seeds are roasted and used as a coffee substitute.

Cultivation: They are grown from seeds, which are easy to collect. They need high temperatures for germination (over 20°C) and a sunny position. Often seeds are soaked for 24 hours before sowing to give quick germination. Seeds are sown 1.5-2.5 cm deep with 2-3 seeds per hole. Later these are thinned out to one plant. Seeds can be sown in nurseries and plants transplanted. Pinching out the tops of plants when 30 cm high encourages branching. A spacing of about 90 x 45 cm is suitable. About 8-10 kg of seed are required for one hectare. Most kinds respond to fertiliser. Seeds do not breed true and can cross with other kinds of okra growing nearby. This is not normally a problem but simply means plants and fruit are not all the same.

Production: Plants maintain production if the fruits are harvested regularly. Plants are ready to harvest 8-10 weeks after sowing. Seed yields of 500-800 kg per hectare are recorded. Pod yields of 4-6 tonnes per hectare occur. It takes 2-4 months from sowing to harvest of young pods. Pods develop 5-10 days after flowering. Pod harvests can continue for 1-2 months. Leaving pods on the plants stops new pods developing.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
seed	9.2	1721	23.7	-	-	-	-
leaf	81.0	235	4.4	116	59	0.7	-
pod (fresh)	88.0	151	2.1	185	47	1.2	-
fruit (cooked)	90.0	134	1.9	58	16.3	0.5	0.6

Vegetables

Common name: Java bean

Local:

Scientific name: *Senna obtusifolia*

Plant family: FABACEAE

Description: An annual or perennial herb that grows 0.6-2.5 m tall. The leaf has leaflets in 3 pairs that are oval and 1-6 cm long by 0.5-3.9 cm wide. The top of the leaf is rounded but with a sharp tip. It is wedge shaped at the base. The flower stalks have 1 or 2 flowers. The stalk for the flower cluster is very short, but the stalk for the individual flowers is 1-3.5 cm long. The flower petals are orange-yellow and 1-2 cm long. The fruits are thin, slightly curved and tapering pods. They are 13-23 cm long and 4-7 mm wide. The seeds are brown. They are 4.5-6.5 cm long by 2-4mm wide.



Distribution: A tropical plant that grows throughout the tropics. It is mostly a weed of roadsides and waste places. It grows from sea level to 2000 m altitude. It grows along rivers and near lakes. In Africa it grows up to 1700 m altitude. It can grow in arid places.

Use: The young leaves are cooked and used as a vegetable. The leaves are fermented into a high protein supplement to meat. The juice during fermentation is made into a stew with okra, beef and salt. The seeds are occasionally dried and ground into powder and cooked and eaten. Seeds are also roasted and used as a coffee substitute. **Caution:** Older leaves can cause diarrhoea. The seeds are possibly poisonous and should be well cooked.

Cultivation: It can be grown from seed.

Production:

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
leaf	79.7	251	5.6	-	113	5.9	-

Image accessed from: <https://tse2.mm.bing.net/th?id=OIP.ZJkno9RQyqSH5azcrmABAwHaFj&pid=Api>

Vegetables

English: Horseradish tree

Local:

Scientific name: *Moringa oleifera*

Plant family: MORINGACEAE

Description: A small, soft-wooded tree that grows 9-12 m tall. The tree loses its leaves during the year. The bark is grey, thick, corky and peels off in patches. The leaves are pale green and the leaf is divided 3 times. The whole leaf is 30-60 cm long and the leaflets are usually oval and 1-2 cm long. The leaflets are jointed with a gland near the joint. The flowers are pale yellow. They occur in long sprays 30 cm long. Each flower has 5 petals and of these one is erect and 4 are bent backwards. The fruit is a long capsule 30-100 cm long by 2 cm wide. The seed capsules are up to 45 cm long. They are roughly triangular in shape. The seeds have 3 wings. Often the fruiting kinds are grown as annual plants.



Distribution: A tropical and subtropical plant. They suit the dry lowland areas and grow up to 1350 m altitude in the tropics. They are not hardy to frost. They cannot tolerate water-logging. A pH of 6-7.5 is suitable. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 9-12.

Use: The young tops and leaves are eaten cooked. They are eaten as potherbs or used in soups and curries. They can be dried and stored for later use. The very young long pods are eaten cooked, especially in curries and soup. They are also pickled. The young seeds are eaten roasted or fried. Sometimes the roots are used as a horseradish substitute. A gum from the bark is used as seasoning. The bark is used for tea. The roots, leaves, flowers and fruits are eaten cooked in water and mixed with salt and chili peppers. The oil expressed from the seeds is used in salads.

Cultivation: It is best to grow plants from 1 metre long cuttings but they can be grown from seed. They can be used as a hedge and pruned regularly to produce more leaves. Properly dried seed can be stored for a long time in sealed containers in a cool place. Normally perennial types are grown from cuttings and annual types are grown from seed.

Production: Trees are fast growing. They can be pruned or topped. With one variety the tree flowers and fruits continuously while with the other variety there are flowers and fruit once per year. The fruit ripens 3 months after flowering. Annual types produce fruit 6 months after planting. Leaves are best dried in the shade to retain more of their Vitamin A.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
leaf	76.4	302	5.0	197	165	3.6	-
flower	84.2	205	3.3	-	-	5.2	-
leaf (boiled)	87	189	4.7	40	31.0	2.0	0.2
pod (raw)	88.2	155	2.1	7	141	0.4	0.5
seed	6.5	-	46.6	-	-	-	-

Vegetables

English: Pumpkin

Local:

Scientific name: *Cucurbita maxima*

Plant family: CUCURBITACEAE

Description: A pumpkin family plant. It is a creeping vine with tendrils. It is an annual plant. The stems are soft and round in cross section. The leaves are large and hang loose. They are dark green and kidney shaped. The edges of the leaves are entire. There are large nodes at the base of the leaf. The tendrils are fairly stout and are divided half way along their length into many branches. Male flowers are carried on long upright stalks. The 5 petals are united into a long yellow tube. The female flowers are larger than the male and are fewer in number and carried on shorter stalks. The fruit varies in size, colour and patterns on the skin. They can be round, oval or flattened, with yellow, orange or green skin. The surface can be smooth or rough and warty. The flesh is yellow and edible. The seeds are in the centre. The seeds are white or brown. They are flattened but plump and have a slanting scar at the top. The seeds are edible. (*C. moschata* does not have hairy stems but has fruit with a thickened stalk near where it joins the fruit.) There are a large number of cultivated varieties.



Distribution: A subtropical plant that grows from sea level to 2400 m altitude. They need a fertile soil. *C. moschata* is better suited to coastal areas. They are frost sensitive but better suited to cooler areas than *C. moschata*. It can grow in arid places. It suits hardiness zones 8-11.

Use: The young leaf tips are eaten cooked. They can also be dried and stored. The fruit can be eaten cooked. They are baked, boiled, fried, steamed or mashed. They are used in pies and cakes. The seeds are edible, raw or roasted. They are also ground into a meal. The male flowers are eaten after removing the stamen and calyx.

Cultivation: They are grown from seed. Usually 2 or 3 seeds are planted together in a mound. The distance apart depends on the cultivar. Some kinds are better for leaf tips. It is good to save seed of adapted varieties.

Production: Fruit are ready for harvest after about 3-4 months. Seed can be saved from fruit for re-sowing, but as pumpkins cross-pollinate, different types become mixed.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
seed (dry)	6.9	2264	24.5	38	1.9	14.9	7.5
fruit	69.6	439	1.4	-	-	-	-
leaf	88.0	160	4.9	260	28	2.5	0.9
flower	88.7	107	1.4	173	14	0.8	0.1

Vegetables

English: Yellow nutsedge

Local:

Scientific name: *Cyperus esculentus*

Plant family: CYPERACEAE

Description: An upright grass-like sedge. It continues to grow from year to year. It is usually 30-90 cm tall. The shiny leaves are long and narrow. They are arranged on 3 rows around an angular stem. The leaves often have a pointed tip and are light green. The flowers are yellow spikes 1-1.5 cm long. There are many creeping underground stems (rhizomes). These spread out then end in a swelling. This tuber is round and 5-20 mm long. It has a thin brown skin and is crisp and nutty.



Distribution: A tropical plant that grows throughout the tropics and warm temperate zone. It is common in seasonally dry grasslands. It does not tolerate shade. High temperatures (27-30°C) and low nitrogen favours tuber production. It grows best in sandy soils with pH 5.5-6.5. It can tolerate salty soils. Day lengths of 8-12 hours favours tuber production. Day lengths of over 16 hours favour vegetative growth. It can grow in arid places.

Use: The tubers are eaten raw or baked. Sometimes they are ground into flour and boiled into a porridge. The oil from the tubers can be used for cooking. It is edible. The roasted tubers are used as a coffee substitute. The tubers are used as a source of potash for softening and flavouring green leafy vegetables.

Cultivation: Plants are grown from tubers. Tubers are soaked in water for 24-36 hours before being planted out. Sometimes tubers remain dormant but if they are chilled they grow better and produce more tubers. A spacing of 10-15 cm apart along rows 60-90 cm apart are suitable. Tubers should be placed 2.5-4 cm deep. The tubers are dug, washed and dried for 1-3 days before being sold or used.

Production: Yields of 800-900 kg per hectare of tubers are achieved on sandy soils. Yields of 8000-14000 kg per hectare are possible. Tiger nuts take 90-120 days to reach maturity.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
rhizome	36.5	1262	3.5	-	-	8.0	-
bulb	77.4	342	0.9	-	21	4.2	0.6

Vegetables

English:

Local:

Scientific name: *Leptadenia lancifolia*

Plant family: APOCYNACEAE

Description: A creeping shrub with many stems. The leaves are alternate and taper towards the tip. The stems are light green. Young shoots curve upwards and there are long spaces between the leaves. The leaves are up to 10 cm long. They are oval and light green. The flowers are greenish-yellow. The fruit are cone shaped and have 2 valves. These split open releasing cottony winged seeds. The plant has a sticky sap when crushed.



Distribution: A tropical plant that grows in dry savannah. In Ethiopia it grows between 500-1500 m altitude. It grows on sandy loams. It grows in areas with an annual rainfall between 1100-1500 mm. It can grow in arid places. It can tolerate drought. It is little damaged by insects.

Use: The young leaves are eaten. They are washed then cooked. They are usually cooked along with other leaves. They are slightly bitter and are eaten with beans, pigeon pea, or cowpeas.

Cultivation: It can be grown on the fences near houses to provide leafy greens. Plants are grown from seeds.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
leaf (raw)	81.0	226	4.9	4915	78	5.4	-

Image accessed from:

[http://www.westafricanplants.senckenberg.de/images/pictures/leptadenia hastata, kafoutine, senegal, 7116 6620 915747 o 996 b0494d.jpg](http://www.westafricanplants.senckenberg.de/images/pictures/leptadenia_hastata_kafoutine_senegal_7116_6620_915747_o_996_b0494d.jpg)

Vegetables

Common name: Lotus-seed herb

Local:

Scientific name: *Alternanthera sessilis*

Plant family: AMARANTHACEAE

Description: A low lying and spreading plant which has many branches. It continues to grow from year to year. It has a strong taproot. The stem and branches are up to 60-100 cm long and near the ends there are 2 lines of hairs along the stem. The leaves are smooth and attached to the stem without a stalk. They are opposite. The leaves are 1-10 cm long and 0.2-2 cm wide. The flowers heads are white and 5-7 mm long. They grow along the plant and do not have flower stalks. It flowers all year round. The fruit are oval and compressed on the side. The seed is about 1.5 cm across. When plants are growing in water the stems become hollow and the plants float.



Distribution: A tropical plant. It grows in the lowlands and the highlands. It occurs in most tropical places. It is common in waste land at low and medium altitudes in the Philippines. It grows in open moist places from sea level to 2000 m in Papua New Guinea. In Fiji it grows from sea level to 500 m. In Nepal it grows to 2400 m altitude. It can grow in arid places. It is best in alkaline soil. It can grow in seasonally water logged soils and near rivers and ditches.

Use: The leaves and tender tips are cooked and eaten. They are used in soups. It is also used to prepare a cool drink. The harvested leaves can only be stored for 2-3 days.

Cultivation: It can be grown by dividing the underground stem. It can also be grown from sections which root at the nodes. It can be grown by seed.

Production: The first harvest of leaves can be taken 50-60 days after planting.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
leaf	89.3	109	4.5	57	77	-	-
shoot	-	-	5.0	577	-	16.7	-

Image sourced from: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alternanthera_sessilis.jpg

Vegetables

English: Silver spinach

Local:

Scientific name: *Celosia trigyna*

Plant family: AMARANTHACEAE

Description: A branched and straggling herb that grows 25-120 cm tall. The lower leaves have long leaf stalks. The plant looks like *Amaranthus hybridus* until it starts to flower. Where the leaf stalk joins the stem there is a pair of small moon-shaped leaflets that lie around the stem. The small white or silvery flowers are crowded together in separate clusters. The fruit is a capsule which is almost round and has several seeds.



Distribution: A tropical plant that grows in tropical lowlands and highlands in Africa. It is often along the coast but grows from sea level to 1960 m above sea level. It needs an annual rainfall of up to 2500 mm and an average temperature of 25-30°C. It cannot tolerate a temperature below 15°C. It grows best on fertile, well drained soils.

Use: The young shoots and leaves are cooked and eaten. They are finely cut and used in soups, stews and sauces. Because they can be bitter, they need extensive cooking or mixing with other foods.

Cultivation: Plants are grown from seeds which germinate in 4-5 days. It grows for 90-120 days. Because the seeds are small, they are best mixed with sand to give a more even distribution when sowing.

Production: Plants can be uprooted and harvested or leaves removed. Harvests of 4-5 t/ha can be achieved from weekly harvests over 2 months.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
leaf	89.0	139	2.7	94	10	5.0	-

Image accessed from <http://www.flickr.com/photos/36517976@N06/5063937939>

Nuts, seeds, herbs and other foods

English: Peanut

Local:

Scientific name: *Arachis hypogea*

Plant family: FABACEAE

Description: Peanuts grow on spreading bushy plants up to about 40 cm high. The leaves are made up of 2 pairs of oppositely arranged leaflets. Flowers are produced in the axils of the leaves. Two main kinds of peanuts occur. The runner kind (Virginia peanut) has a vegetative or leafy branch between each fruiting branch and therefore produces a spreading bush. The bunch type (Spanish-Valencia peanuts) produces fruiting branches in a sequence one after the other along the branches. They grow as a more upright plant and grow more quickly.



Pods are produced on long stalks which extend under the ground and they contain between 2-6 seeds. The stalk or peg from the flower grows down into the soil and then produces the pod and seed under the ground. The flowers need to be no more than 18 cm from the soil surface for the seed pod to develop underground.

Distribution: Peanuts grow in tropical and subtropical areas. They grow well from sea level up to about 1650 metres in the equatorial tropics. They require temperatures of 24-33°C. Plants are killed by frost. They need a well-drained soil and cannot stand water-logging and often require raised garden beds. Peanuts need 300-500 mm of rain during the growing season. Dry weather is needed near harvest.

Use: The seeds can be eaten raw, cooked or sprouted. They are boiled, steamed, roasted, salted or made into peanut butter or flour. The young leaves and unripe pods are edible after cooking. An edible oil is extracted from the seeds. The remaining meal can also be eaten.

Cultivation: Peanuts require soil with good levels of calcium and boron or they produce empty pods. Peanuts have nitrogen fixing root nodule bacteria and therefore can give good yields in soils where nitrogen is low. The nuts are normally removed from the shell before planting and are sown 2-3 cm deep, with 10 cm between plants and 60-80 cm between rows. The soil needs to be weeded and loose by the time the flowers are produced to allow the peg for the seed pods to penetrate the soil.

Production: Flowering can commence in 30 days and it takes 3.5-5 months until maturity. Peanuts are harvested by pulling out the plant when the top of the plants die down. After harvesting, they should be left to dry in the sun for 3-4 days. Virginia peanuts have a longer growing season and the seeds need to be stored for 30 days before they will start to re-grow.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
seed (dry)	4.5	2364	24.3	-	-	2.0	3.0
seed (fresh)	45	1394	15	-	10	1.5	-
leaf	78.5	228	4.4	-	-	4.2	-

Nuts, seeds, herbs and other foods

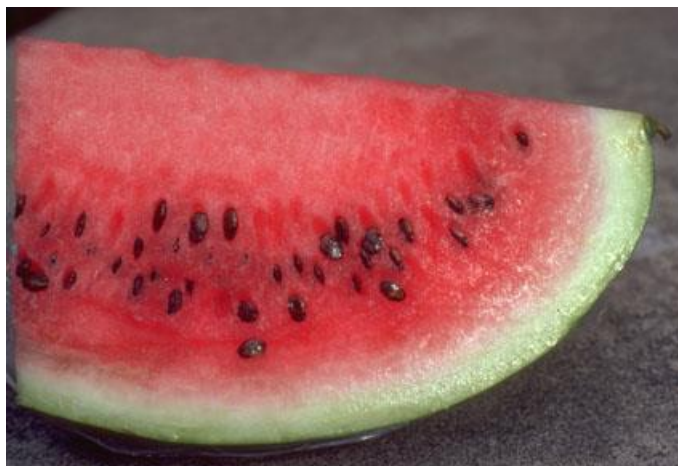
English: Watermelon

Local:

Scientific name: *Citrullus lanatus*

Plant family: CUCURBITACEAE

Description: An annual climber, with deeply divided leaves and tendrils along the vine. It trails over the ground and has hairy, angular stems. The leaves are on long leaf stalks. The leaves are deeply divided along their length. These leaf lobes are rounded and can themselves be divided. The leaves are 5-20 cm long by 2-12 cm across. The tendrils are divided. The plant has separate male and female flowers on the same plant. The flowers are pale yellow and smaller than pumpkin flowers. The flowers occur in the axils of leaves. The male flowers appear first. Fruit are large and round or oval. They can be 60 cm long. Fruit have a hard smooth skin. Several fruit colours and shapes occur. They often have a dark green mottle, or blotches. The fruit has reddish, juicy flesh and black or red seeds. The seeds are oval-shaped and smooth.



Distribution: It grows in most tropical and subtropical countries. It grows best on the coast in the tropics, but will grow up to about 1000 m altitude. It will not stand water-logging and does well on sandy soils. Plants are frost-sensitive. Seed will not germinate below 21°C. Temperatures between 24-30°C are suitable. Fruit are sweeter in arid warm areas. It suits hardiness zones 10-12.

Use: The fruit is eaten raw when ripe. Small, unripe fruit can be cooked as a vegetable. The skin is sometimes candied in vinegar and eaten with fish. Seeds are also eaten. They are dried, soaked in salt water, then roasted. Oil is extracted from the seeds. Very young leaves are occasionally eaten. It is a popular fruit.

Cultivation: They are suitable mainly for the dry season. A spacing of 1.5-2 m is suitable. They grow easily from seed. They do best when fully exposed to the sun. Seed can be dried and stored. If too much vegetative growth occurs, picking out the tip to produce side branches will produce more fruit.

Production: Harvesting commences after 4-5 months. The main fruit season is November to January. The ripeness can be determined by tapping the fruit to get a dull sound. The part of the fruit on the ground changes from green to light yellow and the tendril near the base of the fruit becomes dry when ripe. Fruit yield can be 45-60 t/ha.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
fruit	94.0	92	0.4	20	5	0.3	0.1
seed	5.1	2330	28.3	0	0	7.3	10.2

Nuts, seeds, herbs and other foods

English: Doum palm

Local:

Scientific name: *Hyphaene thebaica*

Plant family: ARECACEAE

Description: A tall, branched palm that grows 15-20 m tall. There are usually 4 crowns, but occasionally 8 or 16. Each branch gives rise to a crown. Each crown has 8-20 fan shaped leaves. The stem is smooth but it has the scars of the old leaf bases. The leaves are broad (130-180 cm) and with 20-40 long, thin segments. The leaves are grey-green. The leaf stalk is 90-140 cm long and spiny with curved hooks along the edges. The male flower is 1.3 m long and the female flower is a similar length, but is densely furry in the axils at the base of the fruit. The fruit is a dry fruit with a stone inside. They are about 7.5 x 5 cm and usually an irregular shape. The shiny outer layer encloses a middle layer which smells of gingerbread. This surrounds the hard stone which contains the seed kernel. The seeds are very hard and with a white kernel and a hollow centre. About 20-50 seeds weigh one kilogram. The mealy flesh of the fruit is edible.



Distribution: A tropical plant that grows in warm temperate, subtropical and tropical regions. It will not tolerate frost. It grows in coastal regions and can grow in arid places. It is found in the drier parts of West Africa and in the Sahel. It often grows on soil left by river floods. It forms dense stands in hot dry valleys. They grow where the temperature is 20°C to 40°C and up to 600 m altitude. They are common in areas with a rainfall between 150mm and 600 mm per year. A soil pH of 6.5-7.6 is preferred. They can grow on saline soils and suit hardiness zones 10-12. They are pollinated by wind.

Use: The spongy middle layer of the fruit is used for flour. The kernel is eaten. The seed kernels are sprouted in soil then eaten. The shoot from the developing seed before leaves emerge can be eaten. The young fruit are boiled and eaten. The palm cabbage is edible. The sap from the growing point can be drunk fresh or made into wine. The trunk contains a kind of sago starch which is edible.

Cultivation: Plants are grown from seed. Sometimes suckers are used. Seed should either be sown in a deep container or direct in the field. The seeds take a long time to germinate.

Production: The first harvest occurs after 6-8 years. Fruit ripen in 8-12 months. A tree lasts for about 60 years. Tapping the tree for sap kills the palm.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
nuts (dry)	6.0	1651	3.9	-	-	-	-
fruit starch	10.7	1237	2.6	-	-	-	-

Nuts, seeds, herbs and other foods

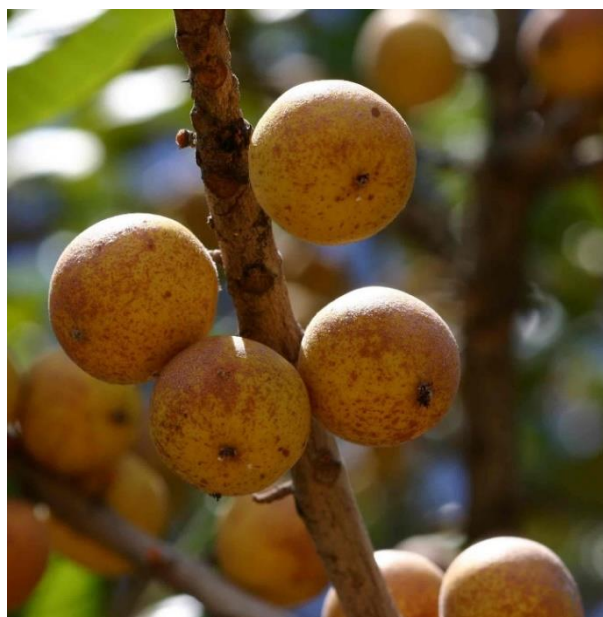
Common name: Mobola plum

Local:

Scientific name: *Parinari curatellifolia*

Plant family: CHRYSOBALANACEAE

Description: A tree which grows up to 12-20 m tall. The trunk is clean. The bark is rough and fire resistant. The young branches are hairy. The leaves are simple and oblong. They are 4-11 cm long by 2-5 cm wide. They narrow towards the base. The upper surface is shiny dark green and the lower surface is dull and covered with felt. The veins are conspicuous and run straight to the edge of the leaf. The flower buds occur in sprays at the ends of the branches. The flowers are pale green and have a strong sweet scent. The fruit are 2.5-4 cm long. They are olive green covered with rough grey spots. They become yellowish-red when ripe. The flesh of the fruit clings to the kernel. The fruit are edible. There are 2 subspecies.



Distribution: A tropical plant native to tropical Africa. It is common on sandy soils and in open deciduous woodland. It is very sensitive to frost and cold. It grows in areas with an annual rainfall between 700-1500 mm. It is often in poorly drained soils with a high water table. Plants can re-grow after fire. It grows in areas between sea level and 2100 m above sea level. It can grow in arid places. It grows in Miombo woodland in Africa.

Use: The fruit are eaten. The fruit are gathered after they fall. The skin and seeds are discarded but the pulp eaten. The fruit are used to make drinks-both intoxicating and non-intoxicating. The seeds are used for flavouring and as raw nuts.

Cultivation: Plants can be grown from seeds. Seeds should be collected fresh from fruit on the tree. The flesh is removed and the seeds dried in the shade. The seeds are sown shallowly. The seedlings need to be transplanted carefully to avoid damage to the taproot. They can be transplanted after 2 years.

Production: Trees from seed can reach 3.9 m after 9 years. Fruit production often only occurs every second year. Fruit matures in 250 days.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
nut	2.6	2737	28.7	-	-	5.5	3.1
fruit	64.6	533	1.6	-	70.9	0.9	0.4

Image accessed from: <http://1.bp.blogspot.com/-4xS96YPSHms/VqrsB0ZAqpl/AAAAAAAAAWI/RIYLyPiX3JA/s1600/parinari1.jpg>

Nuts, seeds, herbs and other foods

Common name: Karite-nut

Local:

Scientific name: *Vitellaria paradoxa*

Plant family: SAPOTACEAE

Description: A compact deciduous tree which loses its leaves during the year. It grows 15-25 m tall and has a spreading crown. The trunk is short and stout and can be 2 m across. The corky bark is dark with cracks making it look like a crocodile skin. White latex comes out when the bark is cut. The branches bend backwards almost to the ground when the leaves are wet. The leaves are oblong with wavy edges and clustered at the ends of branches. They are 10-25 cm long and 5-8 cm wide. The leaves are leathery and shiny and reddish when young. The flowers have both sexes and are produced in the dry season before the leaves. The flowers are white and clustered at the ends of shoots. They are about 1 cm long. They have a sweet smell. The fruit are a flattened round shape and 4-5 cm across. The fruit stalk is 1-3 cm long. The fleshy layer is about 1 mm thick. When the fruit is green, it exudes latex. The fruit turns brown when ripe. There can be 1-4 seeds which are shiny brown with a white scar down the side. They have a white kernel and a fragile husk.



Distribution: A tropical plant that grows in hot tropical lowland in areas with a low rainfall. It is common in drier parts of equatorial Africa and occurs between latitudes 0-15°N. It occurs in savannah with a shallow water-table, most often between 500 and 1000 m altitude. It grows in areas with an annual rainfall of 600-1000 mm and a marked dry season of 6-8 months. It suits places with average temperatures of 24-30°C. It grows best with a minimum temperature of 21°C and a maximum of 36°C. It does best on dry alluvial sandy soils which are rich in humus. It cannot tolerate areas which flood. It can re-grow after fire. It can grow in arid places.

Use: The fruit pulp is eaten raw when very ripe or is lightly cooked after removing the seed. The roasted kernels are pounded and then ground to give an oily shea butter paste. This must be boiled, then the oil skimmed off along with the impurities. Purified shea butter is edible and used in cooking. The fat is used in margarine.

Cultivation: Plants grow naturally in several areas in Africa. Plants are grown from seed. Seed germinates easily. It is best to plant seeds where they are to grow. Fresh seed are sown 5 cm deep. Young plants cannot tolerate weeds or fire. A spacing of 8 m apart is suitable, with 30-50 trees per hectare. Fruit are harvested from the ground as soon as they fall. The fleshy pulp rots and splits to expose the nut. Burying the fruit in a shallow pit for a few days quickens this process. The nuts are then dried for about 12 days in the sun.

Production: Seedlings are slow growing and start producing fruit after 12-15 years. They take 30 years to mature. Yields of 15-20 kg of fruit per tree are average. Trees often only produce every second or third year. The fruit takes 4-6 months to ripen. About 50 kg of fresh nuts will give 12-20 kg of dry kernels which yield 4 kg of shea butter. The fruit is collected as it falls.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
nut (dried)	6.9	2420	6.8	-	-	3.0	-
fruit (pericarp)	74.3	393	1.9-	-	-	4.7	-

Image sourced from: https://www.globalshea.com/cache/images/2012-06-29_tamale_shea_picking-6061_344.jpg

Nuts, seeds, herbs and other foods

Common name: Egyptian thorn

Local:

Scientific name: *Acacia nilotica*

Plant family: FABACEAE

Description: A small spiny tree that usually grows about 6 m tall but can grow up to 20 m tall. It is often branched from the base. The crown is usually rounded. The bark is brown-black and rough with cracks along it. The young shoots are reddish-brown and hairy. It has thorns up to 10 cm long that often point away from the shoot tip. The leaves divide twice and are grey-green. New growth occurs in the dry season. Small glands are visible along the leaf stalk. The flowers have rounded heads and are bright yellow with a scent. The pods can be straight or curved and are about 17 cm long and 2 cm wide. They are green and fleshy



when young and have a sweet smell. They are rounded at both ends. The pods turn purple-brown when mature. Gum is exuded out of the pods if they are squeezed. There are 8-15 flat seeds in the pod. Seeds are and about 1 cm across. They are smooth and dark brown. The pods rot and do not break open. Seven subspecies have been recognised.

Distribution: It is a tropical plant that is common in Africa. It grows in semi-arid and arid areas like the Sahel and Sahara. It can grow on a wide variety of soils. Near the equator is grows from 600-1800 m altitude.

Use: The pulp in the pod is eaten. It is also boiled in water and sugar added to make a drink. The pods can be used as a vegetable or the seeds fried and eaten alone. The gum is edible and used for sweets. It is mixed with sesame seeds and fried in ghee. It is eaten fresh or roasted. It is used in the preparation of candied flowers that are made into fritters. The bark is used to make wine and is also eaten with meat soup.

Cultivation: Plants are grown from seed. There are 6000-11000 seeds per kg. Bad and insect damaged seeds can be floated off in water. For fresh seeds, seed treatment is not necessary. For dry stored seed, the hard seed coat needs to be broken. Normally this is done by putting the seeds in very hot water and letting the water cool down overnight then planting the seeds immediately. It can also be done by scratching the seed. Seed stores well if kept in a cool, dry, insect free place.

Production: It is a reasonably fast-growing tree. It can be cut back and will regrow.

Food Value: Per 100 g edible portion

Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kJ	Protein g	proVit A µg	proVit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg
gum	11.2	1468	1.0	-	-	19.6	-
seed	-	-	14.1	-	-	-	-

Image sourced from: https://www.botswanaflora.com/speciesdata/image-display.php?species_id=126080&image_id=1

Nutritional values of food plants by plant Family

Plant Family	Scientific name	Common name	Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kj	Protein g	Vit A µg	Vit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg	Page
ARACEAE	Colocasia esculenta	Taro	root	66.8	1231	1.96	3	5	0.68	3.2	11
AMARANTHACEAE	Amaranthus graecizans	Spreading pigweed	leaf (dry)	6.3	903	26.1	-	-	9.8	5	36
AMARANTHACEAE	Alternanthera sessilis	Lotus-seed herb	leaf	89.3	109	4.5	57	77	-	-	51
AMARANTHACEAE	Celosia trigyna	Silver spinach	leaf	89	139	2.7	94	10	5	-	52
APOCYNACEAE	Carissa edulis	Carandas plum	fruit	87.3	1745	9.2	-	-	-	-	42
APOCYNACEAE	Leptadenia lancifolia	-	leaf (raw)	81	226	4.9	4915	78	5.4	-	50
ARECACEAE	Phoenix dactylifera	Date palm	fruit	58.5	598	0.9	50	6	1.3	-	38
ARECACEAE	Hyphaene thebaica	Doum palm	nuts (dry)	6	1651	3.9	-	-	-	-	55
BOMBACACEAE	Adansonia digitata	Boobab	fruit	16	1212	2.2	-	360	7.4	6.7	41
BORAGINACEAE	Cordia sinensis	Grey leafed cordia	fruit	8.8	2015	-	16.6	-	-	-	37
BRASSICACEAE	Eruca vesicaria subsp. sativa	Rocket	leaf	91.7	105	2.6	35	15	1.5	1.5	35
CHRYSOBALANACEAE	Parinari curatellifolia	Mobola plum	fruit	64.6	533	1.6	-	70.9	0.9	0.4	56
CONVOLVULACEA	Ipomoea batatas	Sweet potato	tuber (baked)	72.9	431	1.7	961	24.6	0.5	0.3	20
CUCURBITACEA	Citrullus lanatus	Watermelon	seed	5.1	2330	28.3	0	0	7.3	10.2	54
CUCURBITACEAE	Lagenaria siceraria	Bottle gourd	fruit	93	88	0.5	25	10	2.4	-	19
CUCURBITACEAE	Cucurbita maxima	Pumpkin	leaf	88	160	4.9	260	28	2.5	0.9	48
CYPERACEAE	Cyperus rotundus	Nut grass	bulb	53.3	750	1.9	-	2	5.8	1.4	18
CYPERACEAE	Cyperus esculentus	Yellow nutsedge	bulb	77.4	342	0.9	-	21	4.2	0.6	49
EUPHORBIACEAE	Manihot esculenta	Cassava	tuber	62.8	625	1.4	30	15	0.23	0.48	15
FABACEAE	Vigna vexillata	Pencil yam	tuber	79.6	302	2.1	-	11.6	0.8	0.5	17
FABACEAE	Cajanus cajan	Pigeon pea	seed (young, boiled)	71.8	464	6	2	28.1	1.6	0.8	22
FABACEAE	Canavalia ensiformis	Jack bean	seed	10	1423	20.4	160	-	4.9	-	23
FABACEAE	Cyamopsis tetragonolobus	Guar bean	pod (fresh)	82	-	3.7	198	49	5.8	-	24
FABACEAE	Macrotyloma geocarpum	Hausa groundnut	seed	9	1461	19.4	-	-	15	-	25
FABACEAE	Lablab purpureus	Lablab bean	seed (young)	86.9	209	3	14	5.1	0.8	0.4	26
FABACEAE	Phaseolus lunatus	Lima bean	seed (young, cooked)	67.2	515	6.8	37	10.1	2.5	0.8	27
FABACEAE	Vigna radiata	Mung bean	seed	11	1432	22.9	55	4	7.1	-	28
FABACEAE	Vigna unguiculata subsp. unguiculata	Cowpea	seed (young, boiled)	75.5	406	3.2	79	2.2	1.1	1	29
FABACEAE	Senna occidentalis	Coffee senna	leaf	84.9	205	5	-	17.9	12.7	-	34
FABACEAE	Senna obtusifolia	Java bean	leaf	79.7	251	5.6	-	113	5.9	-	46
FABACEAE	Arachis hypogea	Peanut	seed (fresh)	45	1394	15	-	10	1.5	-	53
FABACEAE	Acacia nilotica	Egyptian thorn	gum	11.2	1468	1	-	-	19.6	-	59
MALVACEAE	Hibiscus cannabinus	Vegetable kenaf	leaf	79	280	5.5	34	-	12.1	-	30
MALVACEAE	Hibiscus trionum	Flower-of-an-hour	leaf	6.3	1263	26.7	-	-	79.8	5.7	31
MALVACEAE	Sida cordifolia	Goat's horns	leaf	6.6	1296	24.2	-	-	79.8	-	32
MALVACEAE	Abelmoschus esculentus	Okra	fruit (cooked)	90	134	1.9	58	16.3	0.5	0.6	45
MORINGACEAE	Moringa oleifera	Horseradish tree	leaf (boiled)	87	189	4.7	40	31	2	0.2	47
MYRTACEAE	Psidium guajava	Guava	fruit	77.1	238	1.1	60	184	1.4	0.2	44
PHYLLANTHACEAE	Phyllanthus emblica	Emblic	fruit	78.4	281	0.6	-	316	0.9	0.5	43
POACEAE	Eleusine coracana	Finger millet	seed	11.7	1594	6.2	-	-	5.3	-	13
POACEAE	Pennisetum glaucum	Bullrush millet	seed	11.6	1442	10.5	-	-	6.5	1.7	14

Plant Family	Scientific name	Common name	Edible part	Moisture %	Energy kj	Protein g	Vit A µg	Vit C mg	Iron mg	Zinc mg	Page
RHAMNACEAE	Ziziphus mauritiana	Indian jujube	fruit	77	360	0.8	21	71	0.4	0.4	39
SAPOTACEAE	Vitellaria paradoxa	Karite-nut	fruit (pericarp)	74.3	393	1.9	-	-	4.7	-	57
ULMACEAE	Celtis integrifolia	Nettle tree	leaf (dry)	10.8	1058	8	-	-	19.7	-	33



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