

# Okinawa Spinach

**Scientific Name:** *Gynura crepioides*

**Common Names:** Okinawa spinach, Hong tsoi, Okinawa lettuce

**Habitat:** originated in Indonesia, commercially grown in China

**Height:** 1-2 ft

**Hardiness:**

USDA Zone 9a: to -6.6 °C (20 °F)

USDA Zone 9b: to -3.8 °C (25 °F)

USDA Zone 10a: to -1.1 °C (30 °F)

USDA Zone 10b: to 1.7 °C (35 °F)

USDA Zone 11: above 4.5 °C (40 °F)

**Description:**

*Gynura crepioides* is commonly known as 'Okinawa Spinach', it is native to Indonesia. 'Okinawa Spinach' is commercially grown in China as an evergreen, it is not a true spinach. Both the stems and the leaves can be eaten raw or cooked. The top of the leaves are dark green and the undersides are purple. 'Okinawa Spinach' has a unique flavor with a faint hint of pine, and will add a beautiful aesthetic element to cuisine. This green is also known as cholesterol spinach, and there are many claims that it lowers cholesterol. This plant will thrive in pretty much any type of soil from clay to silt to sandy soils. It does well in any type of light other than full shade, but will grow best in full sun to partial shade. Okinawa Spinach is not a heavy feeder, and is relatively pest-free. It is good to cut back flowering branches to promote new shoot growth, because the shoots and leaves are what are harvested. Okinawan spinach is very adaptable to container gardening and even grows well on a windowsill.

The blooms are orange and bloom in the late fall to early winter.

Okinawa Spinach is a dense, low growing plant to 70 cm high. Easily the most low maintenance perennial leaf vegetable; it is a hardy plant and relatively pest-free. Thriving in warm, wet conditions Okinawa Spinach does best in subtropical and tropical areas; it is sensitive to frost. An attractive plant with shiny leaves that are green on top and purple underneath; the

flowers are very small and orange. It grows best in full sun to partial shade. It needs ample water, rich, fertile well-drained soil that is kept mulched and prefers a pH of between 6.1 and 6.5.

### **Cultivation:**

This plant requires full to partial sun.

#### *Water Requirements:*

Average Water Needs; Water regularly; do not overwater

#### *Soil pH requirements:*

5.6 to 6.0 (acidic), 6.1 to 6.5 (mildly acidic)

Recommended Planting Time: Cuttings are best taken when the soil temperature is at least 25°C. Rooting the cutting in water before planting will improve results. The plant responds well to pruning, rapidly becoming bushy. Pruning also prolongs its life. Planting Depth: Cuttings 10 - 20 cm long should be half buried in potting mix and kept moist. Spacing: Space plants at 60 cm apart.

### **Propagation:**

Propagation is from herbaceous stem cuttings as the plant does not set seed. The flowers are sterile or the plants will not come from true seed.

### **Uses:**

- **Food:** It is a very nutritious vegetable, eaten raw or cooked. The leaves and young shoot tips are steamed, used in stir fry, tempura, stews, and soups. Try not to overcook it as it can become slimy. The leaves have a crisp, nutty taste with a faint hint of pine. In Okinawa the leaves are often fried and served as tempura. It can also be steamed with rice if it is added for the last 7 minutes of cooking time. This leafy green is also known as cholesterol spinach, and there are many claims that it lowers cholesterol. Young leaves have a much better flavour than the older leaves.
- **Edible Landscaping:** The vivid leaf colour makes this a good choice as a background plant in ornamental beds. Okinawa Spinach can be used in landscaping as a groundcover in full sun (with enough water) or it does well in partial shade. It is very adaptable to container gardening and hanging baskets and will grow inside on a windowsill with good light.

[https://www.agristarts.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/plants.plantDetail/plant\\_ID/313/index.htm](https://www.agristarts.com/index.cfm/fuseaction/plants.plantDetail/plant_ID/313/index.htm)

<https://davesgarden.com/guides/pf/go/91737/>

<https://www.greenharvest.com.au/Plants/Information/OkinawaSpinach.html>