

# LEAFY GREENS AND VEGETABLES OF ETHIOPIA

*PRACTICAL WAYS OF GROWING LOCAL  
FOOD PLANTS AND DOING IT WELL*



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



A project of the Rotary Club of Devonport North,  
District 9830 and Food Plants International

[www.foodplantsolutions.org](http://www.foodplantsolutions.org)



# Leafy Greens and Vegetables in the Ethiopia

Rotary



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Nutrition 4 Education & Development (N4ED) is an Ethiopian nonprofit whose mission is to improve children's nutrition and ensure their full cognitive and physical development. The main activities of the organization focus is on giving parents the knowledge, the desire, the self-confidence, and the financial capacity to provide nutritious and balanced food for their children. That is done through nutrition and health education, saving and loan programs, business, life-skill, and technical training, affordable childcare services and gardening.

One of N4ED's program is gardening. This program is key to transforming in practice the nutritional concept that the organization teaches to communities with theoretical and demonstration classes. Food Plant Solutions will support N4ED by providing the most appropriate informative resources regarding plants that are full of nutrients and that are easy to cultivate in Ethiopia's environment. This information is about different plants, and describes which part of the plant is edible, the nutrient value of each plant and well as other important information. N4ED will use these guides to implement its gardening projects and also to disseminate it among other stakeholders, the important information on Ethiopian endemic nutritious plants.

For further details about the project please contact us at: [info@foodplantsolutions.org](mailto:info@foodplantsolutions.org)

We welcome and encourage your support.



**Food Plant Solutions** - A project of the Rotary Club of Devonport North, Rotary District 9830 & Food Plants International.

This booklet is based on information from the Food Plants International (FPI) database, "Edible Plants of the World", developed by Tasmanian agricultural scientist Bruce French.



# Ethiopia

## country of beautiful leafy vegetables

Okra



Jute



Shepherd's purse



Bean leaves





# Leafy greens - the health foods of the nation





# Using leafy greens — collect and cook a mixture of leaves



**Healthy food**



**Many edible leafy greens grow around houses and along roadsides.**



**Green leafy vegetables should be cooked.**

# Healthy people eat leafy greens

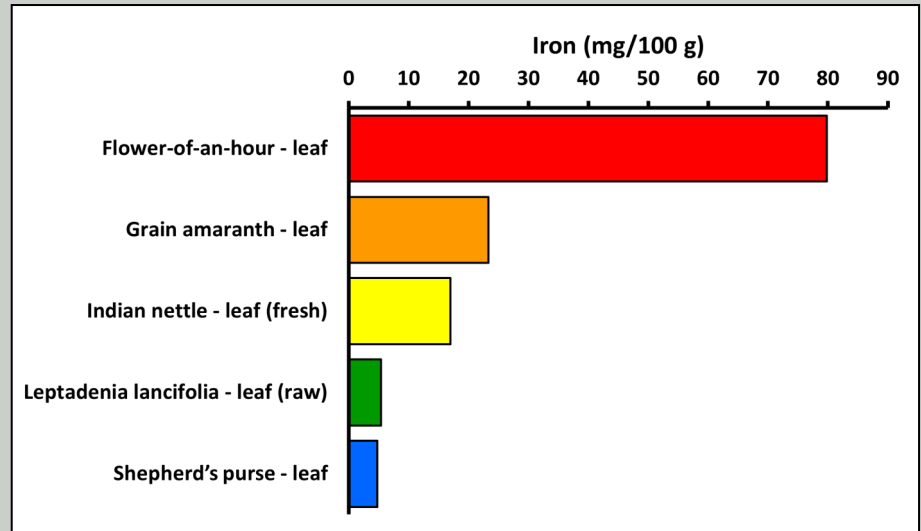
- **Many plants have edible leaves.**
- **Edible leaves are nutritious.**
- **Normally, all leaves should be cooked to kill bacteria.**
- **Everybody should eat a fish tin full of dark green leaves every day to stay healthy.**
- **Some leafy greens can be grown as hedges, in swamps, and around houses to provide a regular daily supply of leafy vegetables.**

# Green leafy vegetables - Iron content

Iron is important, it is what makes our blood red.

Iron helps oxygen get to our lungs. This helps us to have energy to work.

When we are short of iron we are called anaemic. Iron is more available when Vitamin C is also present.





# Grain amaranth



**The leaves and young plants  
are eaten cooked.**

**Seed can be ground for flour.**

*Amaranthus caudatus*



# Garden cress



*Lepidium sativum*



**Young leaves are used in  
salads or cooked as a  
vegetable.  
Seeds can be sprouted and  
eaten.**

# Flower-of-an-hour



*Hibiscus trionum*

**The leaves and shoots are eaten cooked. Seeds can be eaten raw.**





# Sweet potato leaf



**Leaves are edible raw or cooked.**

**Ground cover or climbing plant.**



*Ipomoea batatas*

# Shepherd's purse

The leaves are a good source of Vitamin A.

Young leaves are eaten raw or cooked.



*Capsella bursa-pastoris*



# Horseradish tree



**A fast growing  
small tree**



**The young tops and leaves are eaten  
cooked. They can be dried for later use.**



*Moringa oleifera*



# Leptadenia lancifolia



**Young leaves are edible after cooking.**

*Leptadenia lancifolia*

# Taro leaf

**A good quality delicacy.**



*Colocasia esculenta*

# Indian nettle

Leaves are eaten  
cooked as a vegetable



*Acalypha indica*





# Leafy greens of Ethiopia



**Dark green leaves should be eaten daily.  
They should be steamed, fried or boiled.**



# Edible leaves



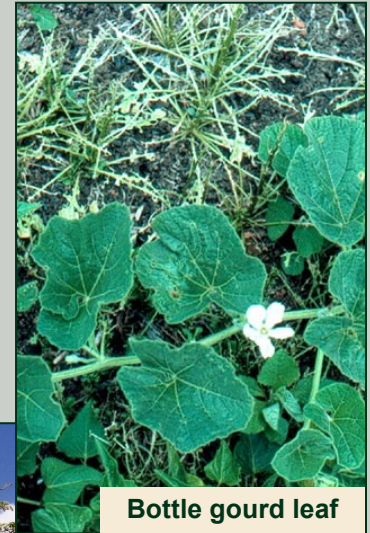
Taro



Bitter cucumber leaf



Okra



Bottle gourd leaf



Boabab

# Plant poisons

**Some foods contain substances that can cause illness. Check preparation methods before eating. Some examples are:**

- Bacteria on leaves can cause stomach upsets. Food should be cooked to kill bacteria.**
- Cyanide is a poison commonly found in plants (e.g. cassava). It makes them bitter, but is destroyed when food is well cooked.**
- Oxalates are common in plants (e.g. taro). They are sour and can burn the throat. Changing the water during cooking can reduce oxalates.**
- Plants can accumulate nitrates that are poisonous to children. This happens when excess nitrogen fertilisers are added to some leafy vegetables (e.g. amaranth).**

# Vegetable foods of Ethiopia



Bitter cucumber



Okra





# Vegetables for variety and nutrition

Some vegetables and edible leaves should be planted near houses so they are easily available, even on wet days, or when people can't get to distant gardens.



As some vegetables only grow in certain seasons, families should plant a wide range to provide food all year.

# Vitamin A value of vegetables

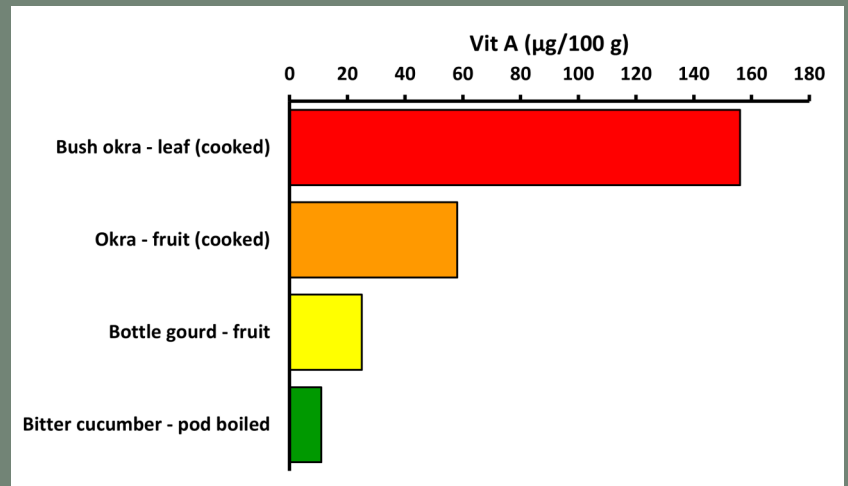
Bush okra leaf



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. In plants, this chemical occurs in a form that has to be converted into Vitamin A in our bodies.

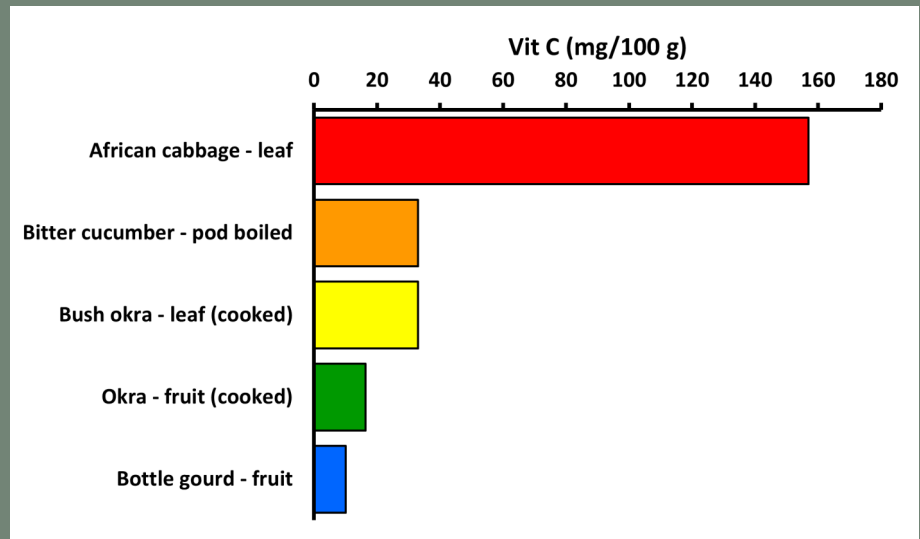


Bottle gourd



# Vitamin C value of vegetables

Vitamin C is important for helping us to avoid sickness





# Vegetables - nutritious and tasty



# Okra



Young leaves, pods and seeds can be eaten. Leaves are edible when cooked, like slippery cabbage.

The pods can be eaten cooked or used to thicken soups.



*Abelmoschus  
esculentus*



# Bitter cucumber



*Momordica  
charantia*

The young, bitter fruit can be boiled, stuffed, fried or pickled.

The leaves are also eaten.



Soaking seeds for 24 hours before planting improves germination



# Marama bean



The young pods are eaten raw. The seeds are usually roasted before eating.



*Tylosema fassoglensis*



# Velvet bean

Beans are soaked until they sprout,  
then washed and boiled.



*Mucuna pruriens*

# African cabbage



Young shoots and flower buds are eaten raw.

The young leaves are eaten raw or cooked.

*Brassica carinata*





# Jute

First leaves can be harvested after 6 weeks.



*Corchorus olitorius*



# Bottle gourd



Young fruit can be boiled, steamed, fried or pickled.

Young tips and leaves can be eaten.



*Lagenaria siceraria*

# Acknowledgements

**This publication was made possible through the generous support of the Rotary Club of Hobart and the Rotary Club of Cobourg**

**It would have not been possible without the commitment and support of the various volunteers, who have shared the vision and unselfishly given their time to support this project.**

**Review, layout and formatting - Lyndie Kite and John McPhee**



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# Notes



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