Leafy Greens and Vegetables in Solomon Islands

Practical ways of growing local food plants, and doing it well

by B. Reg French

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Helping the Hungry Feed Themselves

A Project of the Rotary Club of Devonport North, District 9830, District 9600 & Food Plants International

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Leafy Greens and Vegetables in Solomon Islands

This is one of a series of publications produced for the Learn♦Grow™ Solomon Islands project.

Other publications in the series are:

Food Plants of Solomon Islands – A Compendium (published July 2010). A large reference text with comprehensive scientific and technical information on all food plants of Solomon Islands.

Food Crops of Solomon Islands – A Brief Introduction to the Crops (to be published). A book on the growing practices and food value of crops of potential in Solomon Islands.

Two other field guides in this series are:

Good Gardening and Growing Root Crops in Solomon Islands (published July 2010).

Fruit and Nuts in Solomon Islands (to be published)

All publications will be made available as pdf books on the Learn♦Grow™ website (www.learngrow.org) and the Food Plants International website (www.foodplantsinternational.com)

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Practical ways of growing local food plants, and doing it well

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Other publications in this series

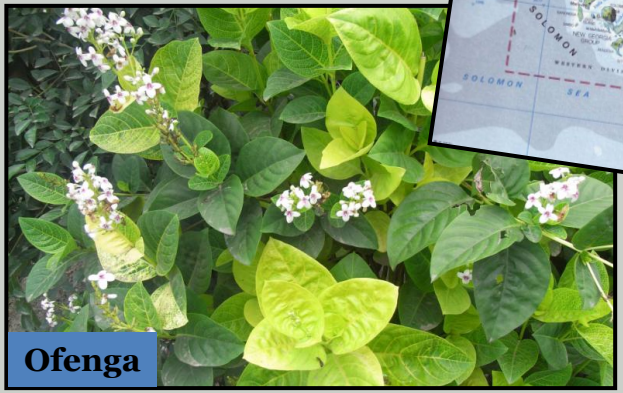
Good Gardening and Growing Root Crops in Solomon Islands

Fruit and Nuts in Solomon Islands

Solomon Islands
land of beautiful leafy vegetables

Kangkong

Sweet fern


Ofenga

Bean leaves

Leafy greens
the health foods of the nation

Slippery kebis

Amaranth

Kangkong

Fig leaf

Using leafy greens

Collect and cook a mixture of leaves

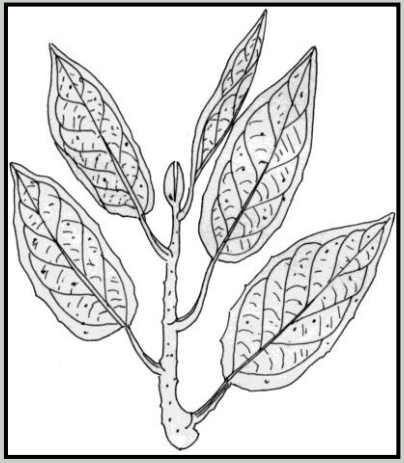
Many edible leafy greens grow around houses and along roadsides

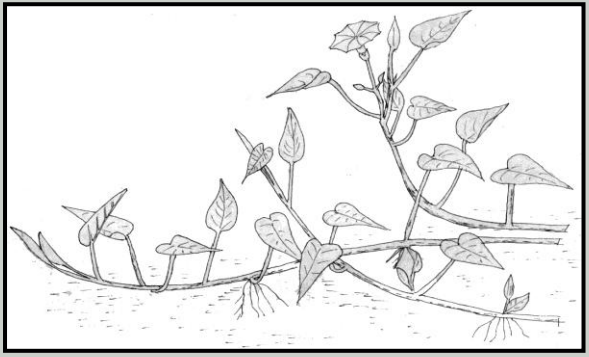
Green leafy vegetables should be cooked

Healthy food

Healthy people …

- **Eat a fish tin full of dark green tropical leaves each day**
- **Make sure children get them**
- **Limit foods like ball head and headed Chinese cabbage**





There is an amazing collection of very attractive, dark green, highly nutritious tropical leafy vegetables.

Edible 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 of dark green tropical leaves every day to stay healthy**
- **Some leafy greens can be grown as hedges, in swamps, on coral soils and around houses to provide a regular daily supply of leafy vegetables**

Green leafy vegetables - Iron content

Leafy greens	*Iron content*
Winged bean leaf	6.2 mg
Kangkong	4.54 mg
Sweet fern	4.4 mg
Indian spinach	4.0 mg
Berobero leaf	4.0 mg
Watercress	3.4 mg
Kumara leaves	2.9 mg
Amaranth	2.3 mg
Taro leaf	1.2 mg
Chinese cabbage	1.0 mg
Cabbage	0.8 mg

Iron is important to keep our blood healthy so we can work strongly.

Winged bean leaves

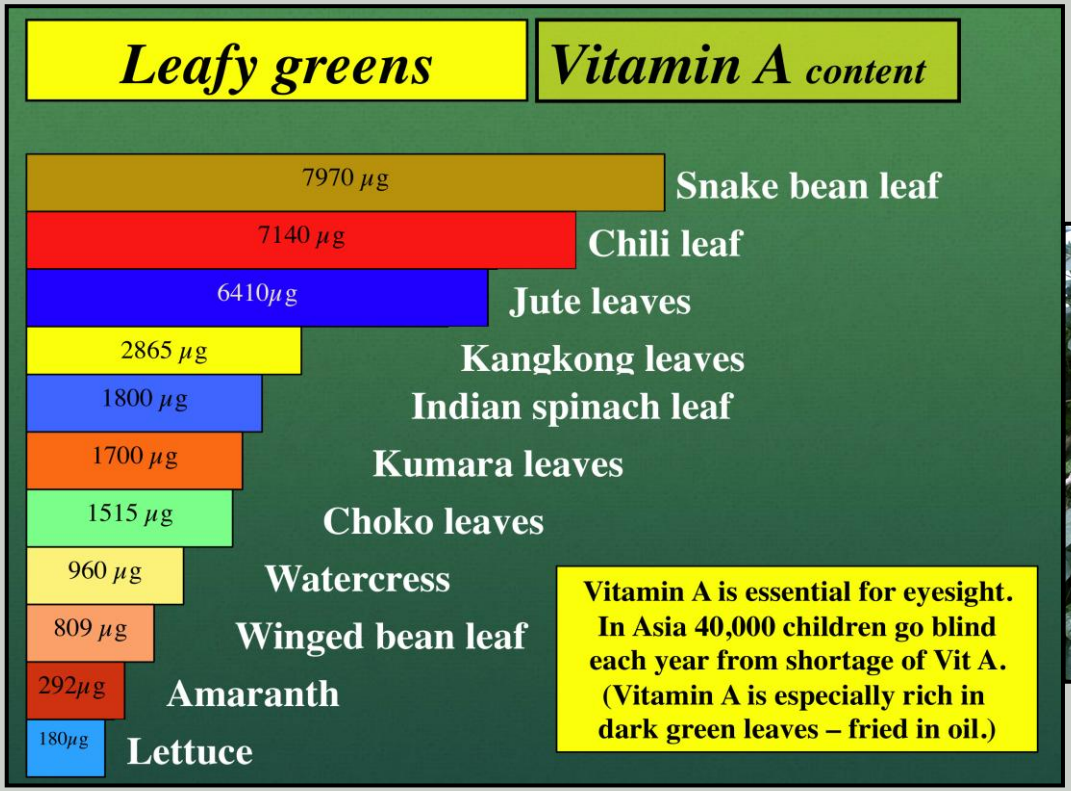
Vitamin C for good health

Fruit & leafy greens	*Vitamin C content*
Kekeso/Lunga leaf	200 mg
Guava fruit	184 mg
Amaranth leaves	169 mg
Moringa leaves	141 mg
Indian spinach leaf	100 mg
Taro leaves	90 mg
Bebero/Geke leaves	85 mg
Sweetleaf	85 mg
Pawpaw fruit	54 mg
Orange fruit	53 mg
Tomato fruit	26 mg

Vitamin C is important for helping us avoid sickness

Kekeso/lunga

Food value of leaves



Snake bean

Slippery cabbage - a delicious, highly nutritious leaf

Fry or steam it to avoid it going slimy

Lema

Weko

Neka

Gnahi

Lope

Abelmoschus manihot

Paura

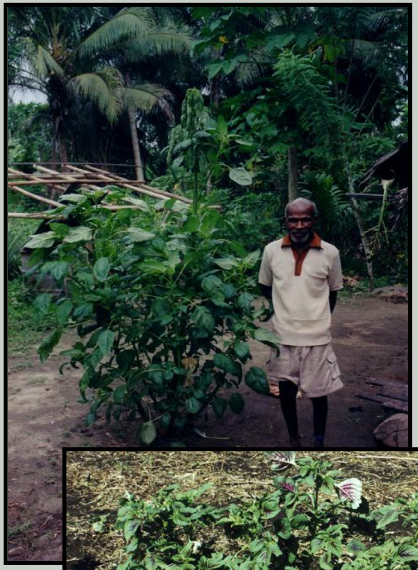
Nyahi

Baera

Nibi

Amaranth - a quick growing green

A home garden favourite



Scattering seeds in old fire ashes helps plants grow well.

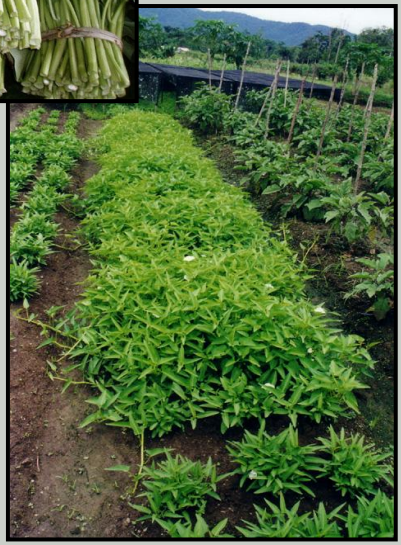
Amaranthus spp

Kangkong - a coastal treat

Varieties for swamps and dryland

A nutritious leaf that grows easily.

Ipomoea aquatica



Nightshade - the first green to grow

Despite European myths, this is a major tropical leafy green vegetable that grows worldwide.

Blackberried nightshade
Solanum nigrum

Blackberried nightshade grows quickly. The leaves and fruit are cooked and eaten.

Fig leaves - great texture and flavour

Mostly small shrubs and trees

Kanava

Nyia nwatu

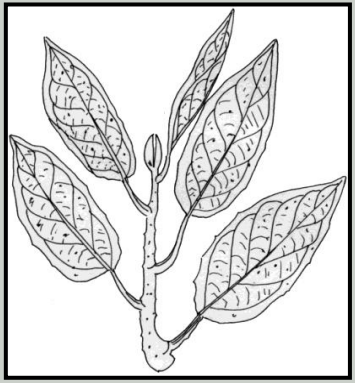
Thakwari

Many figs have edible leaves and fruit.

Mangako

Sakwari

Amosi



Kamau

Pinopoto

Namau

Bakua

Mokau

Ficus copiosa* and *Ficus wassa

Suga/Lenge - a sweet, tender green

Kekoso

Lengo

Nyia nwasoli

Poke

Suagafa

Houka Suga Dae

Dae fasia Sa naroka

Young leaves, nuts and flowers can all be eaten.

Gnetum gnemon

Sweetleaf - a tasty leafy shrub

Popular in Asia and Solomon Islands

Sauropus androgynus

Young leaves are eaten raw and older leaves are cooked. Fruit can be used for jam.

Pumpkin leaves

Best from locally selected tropical plants

Cucurbita moschata

Bebero/ Geke - an edible hedge

Nyia kalo

Kobikobi

Denngi

Momotu

Taqala

Paa

Bebero

Bebenu

Geke

Plants can be grown from seed or cuttings.

Polyscias fruticosa* and *Polyscias verticillata

Climbing swamp fern - a sweet fern

It often grows up trees in swamps

The very young fronds are eaten raw or cooked.

Ponolo

Aono

Rosi

Rara

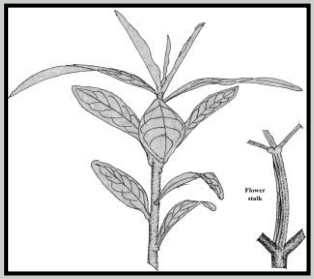
Nivi kakla

Stenochlaena palustris

Kwalo rara **Nya Nave**

Waterleaf - grows in moist soils

Talinum triangulare



The slightly sour young stems and leaves are best steamed to make them less slimy. They should not be eaten in large amounts.

Sweet fern

Popular throughout Asia and the Pacific

Beautiful cooked in coconut milk. It can be fried, steamed and used in stews.

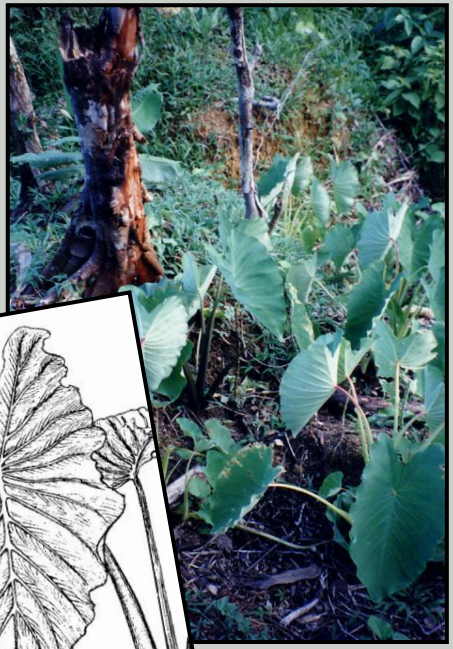
Gleilei **Mula** **Pusa** **Kosikosiri**

Kasume **Raramea** **Takuma sisimia**

It grows in damp ground and along banks of streams.

Diplazium esculentum

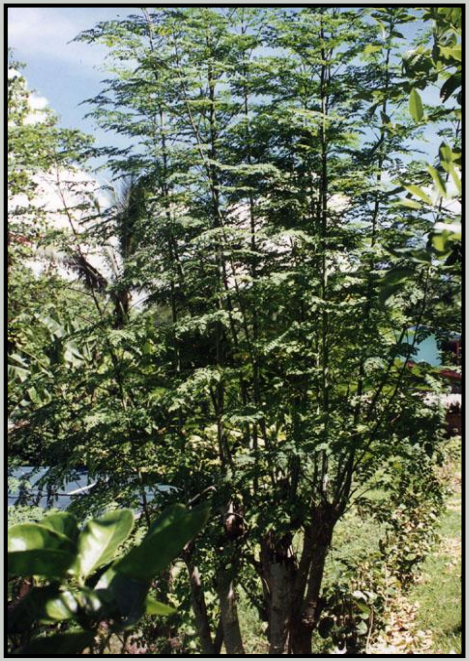
Taro leaf - a good quality delicacy



Colocasia esculenta

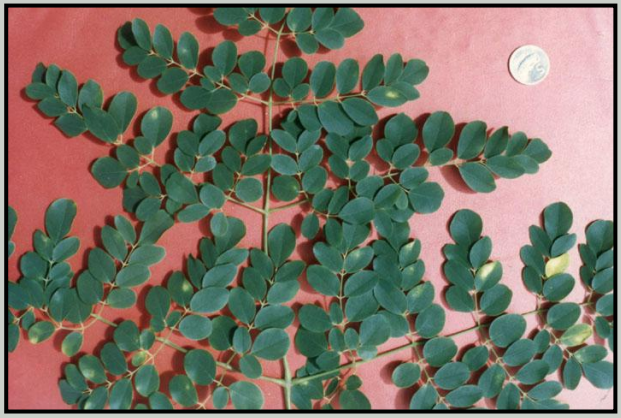
Drumstick tree

A very nutritious introduced tree legume



Moringa oleifera

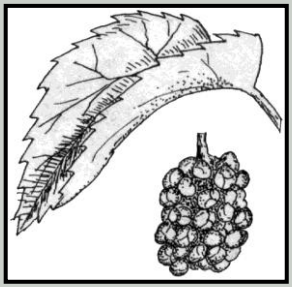
Trees can be grown from seed or cuttings.



***Moringa* is a very nutritious edible leaf, eaten cooked. The pods, seeds and flowers can also be cooked and eaten.**

Mulberry leaves

Good for silk worms and people!



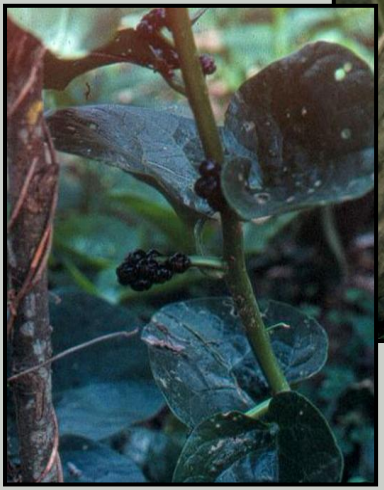
Plants are easy to grow from cuttings.

Morus alba

Mulberry fruit can be eaten raw or cooked. The young leaves can be cooked in stews.

Indian spinach - a climbing coastal green

This creeper can form a lovely shady shelter near houses.



Basella rubra

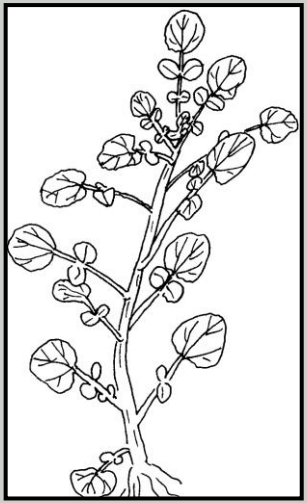
The leaves can be eaten raw or cooked. They are a little slimy but help thicken soups.

Watercress

A special plant for mountain streams running off limestone

Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum

Plants are easy to grow from cuttings planted along the edges of streams with clear running water.



Watercress has a mildly spicy flavour and is nutritious, with good levels of protein, vitamins and minerals.

Puka/Rafarafa - the lettuce tree

Pisonia grandis

Puka

Niuli

Rafarafa

Thathava

Panu marawa

Nyia nyime bula

Trees are often self-sown on rocky headlands where sea birds drop the sticky seeds while cleaning their feathers. Trees can be grown from cuttings.

Ofenga - a Malaita special

Pseuderanthemum whartonianum

Faele	**Burape**	**No taeve**
Ute	**Sungu**	**Nyia nyivale**
Wasina	**Gure**	**Wasina**

Aidua

Gurape

Chilli leaves - a spicy bonus

Chilli fruit are very hot.
The leaves are not quite so hot and very nutritious.

Capsicum frutescens

Leafy greens of Solomon Islands

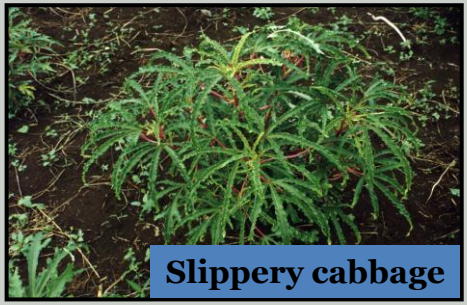
Kangkong

Dark green leaves should be eaten daily. They should be cooked and can be steamed, fried or boiled.

Amaranth

Snake bean

Chilli


Slippery cabbage

Edible leaves

Okra

Slippery kebis

Spring onion

Chinese chives

Peanut

Breadfruit

Indian spinach

Silver beet

Edible leaves

Ball head cabbage

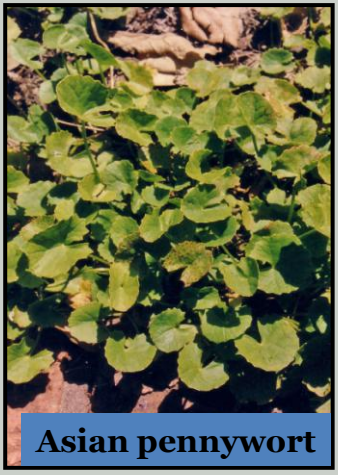
Chinese cabbage

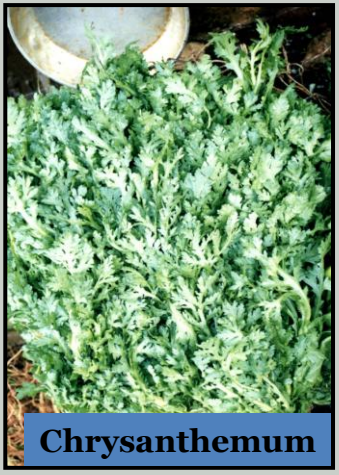
Pigeon pea

Capsicum

Pawpaw

Celosia


Asian pennywort


Chrysanthemum

Edible leaves

Cat's whiskers

Taro

Jute

Okinawan spinach

Pumpkin

Tree fern fronds

Lemon grass

Swamp taro

Edible leaves

Sweet fern

Diplazium pro. fern

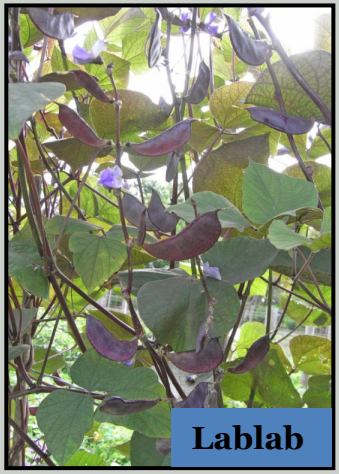
Dracontomelon

Fig

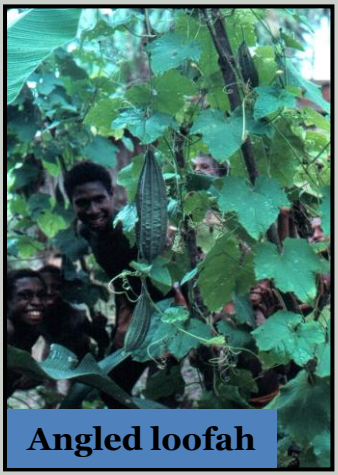
Rosella

Kangkong

Kumara


Lablab

Edible leaves


Angled loofah

Smooth loofah

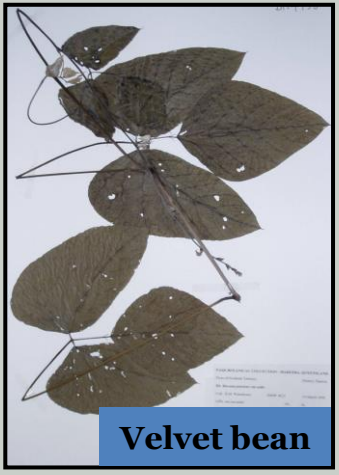
Cassava

Mint

Indian mulberry

Moringa

Mulberry


Velvet bean

Edible leaves

Parsley

Lima bean

Lettuce tree

Pea

Polyscias

Ofenga

Japanese radish

Watercress

Edible leaves

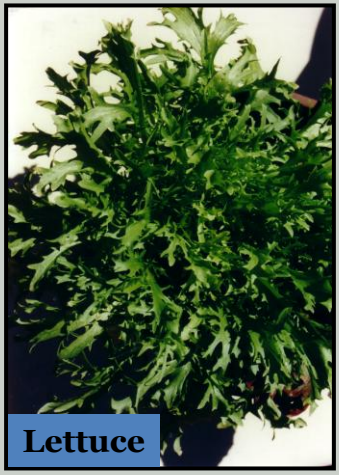
Watermelon

Gnetum

Chilli

Amaranth

Cucumber


Lettuce

Endive

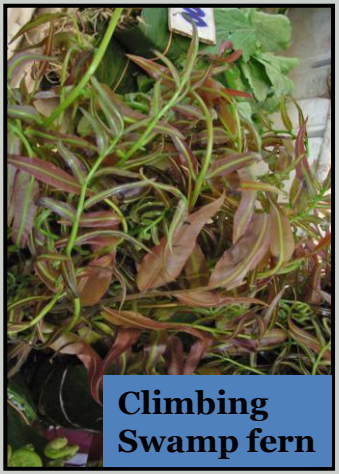
Cobbler's pegs

Edible leaves

Sweet leaf

Choko

Blackberried nightshade


Climbing Swamp fern

Talinum

Snake gourd

Mung bean

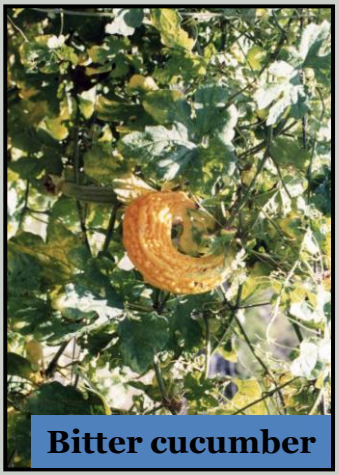
Cowpea

Edible leaves

Chinese taro

Common bean

Spondias


Bitter cucumber

Giant taro

Winged bean

Long bean

Sweet basil

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).**

Solomon Islands
land of great vegetable foods

Mangrove fruit

Wax gourd

Coastal pitpit

Fei banana

Vegetables for variety and nutrition

Coastal pitpit

Cucumber

Ginger

Indian spinach

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

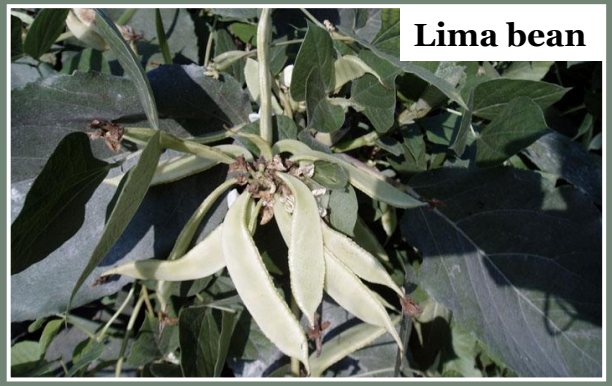
Some vegetables and edible leaves should be planted near houses so they are easily available, even on wet days, or when people can't get to distant gardens.

Choko

Vegetables - nutritious and tasty

Long pitpit

Snake gourd



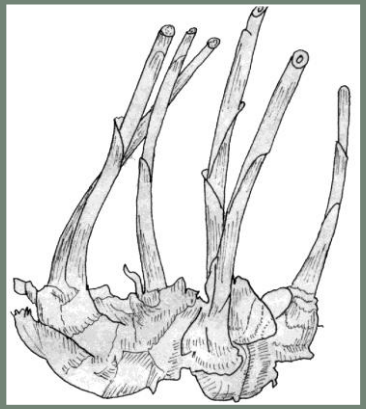
Lima bean

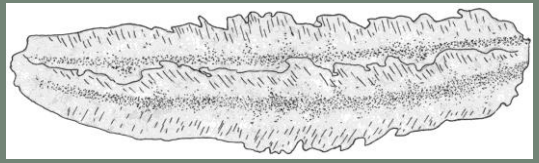
Winged bean

For taste and rich diets, eat a variety of vegetables!

- **Daily garden attractions**
- **Provide nutrition lacking in root crops**
- **Many are loved by children**
- **Beans are especially important in diets**

Our daily gifts to make meals and diets better





Coastal pitpit - great in coconut milk

An attractive and nutritious seasonal food.

Uzoro

Gari

Bira

Kua

Losi

Grerei

Saccharum edule

Choko - a pumpkin family fruit

Suited to slightly higher places in the hills

Sechium edule

The young leaves, fruit, seeds and fleshy root can all be cooked and eaten.

Granadilla - a passionfruit family special

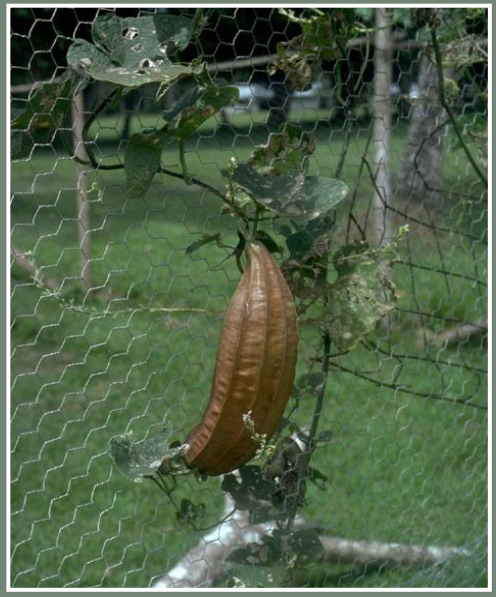
Passiflora quadrangularis

Young fruit are cooked and eaten as a vegetable. Ripe fruit can be eaten as a sweet.

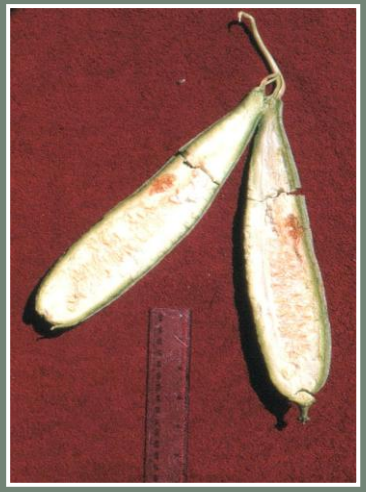
The leaves are poisonous and should not be eaten.

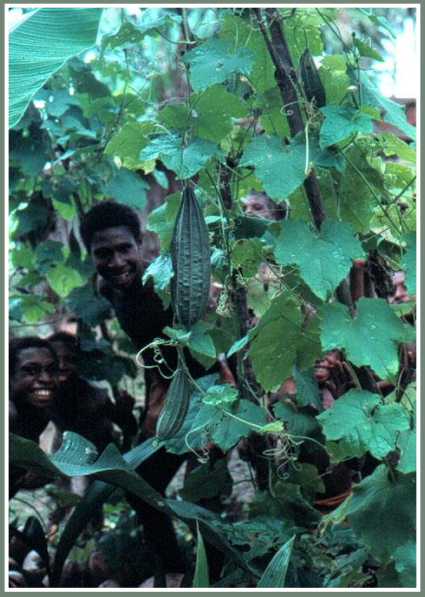
Angled loofah - a tropical special

Young fruit and leaves are cooked and eaten. Seeds can be roasted and eaten.



Luffa acutangula





Snake gourd - a tasty treat

Trichosanthes cucumerina

Young fruit and young leaves can be cooked and eaten.

Bitter cucumber - a spicy addition

The young, bitter fruit are used in soups and stews. The fruit is also a medicinal food that helps control virus diseases.

The young tender leaves can be cooked and eaten as flavouring.

Momordica charantia

Seeds are best soaked for 24 hours before planting. Plants need a trellis to climb over.

Wax gourd - liked by Chinese

The flesh is used in stir fried dishes. Seeds can be fried, and young leaves and flower buds can be cooked, before eating.

Benincasa hispida

Smooth luffa - edible when young

Very young fruit can be eaten in soups and stews. The seeds can be roasted and eaten as a snack.

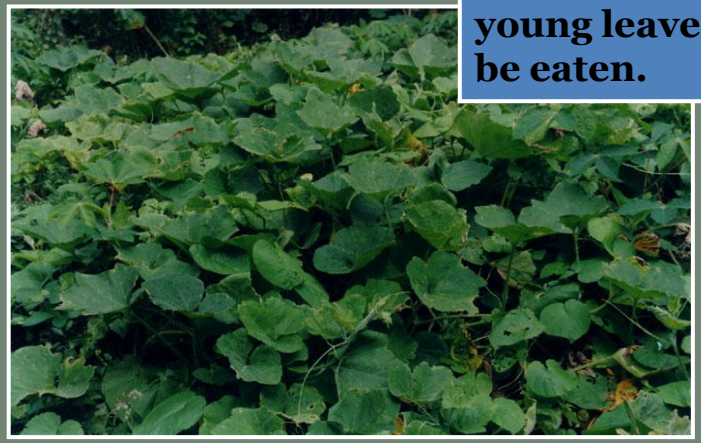
Cucumber - a popular snack best grown from locally saved seed

Cucumis sativus

Pumpkin - edible leaves and fruit

Saving local seeds produces plants with less disease.
Seeds are roasted and young leaves can be eaten.

Cucurbita maxima and Cucurbita moschata

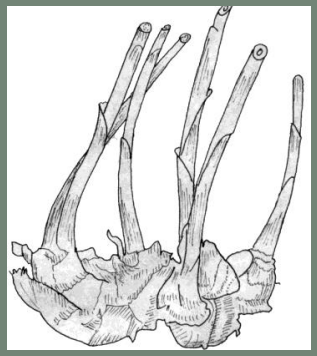


Turmeric - a spice and a colouring

A common colouring and flavouring, especially on some atoll islands.

Curcuma longa

Ginger - a flavouring and a food



Enjoyed fresh and as a flavouring

Zingiber officinale

Corn - a popular snack

Zea mays

Corn needs good seed, good soils and good rainfall to produce well.

Winged bean - an amazing plant

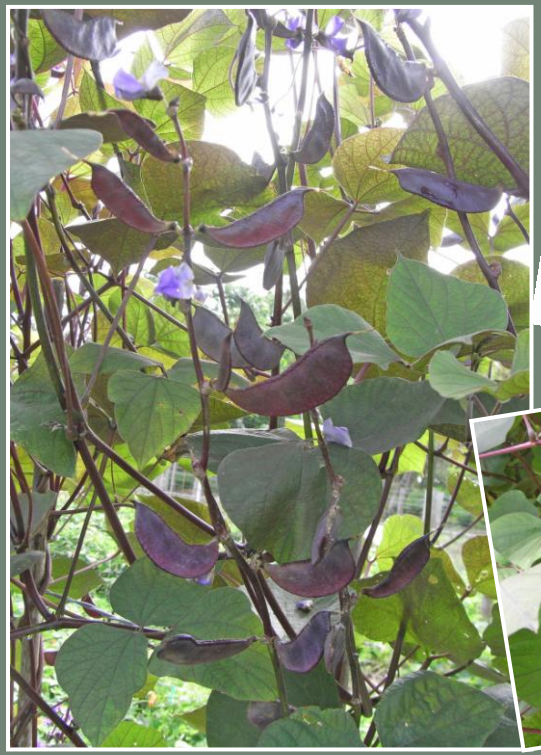
Eat the leaves, flowers, pods, seeds and roots!

Psophocarpus tetragonolobus

A very important plant that provides good quality food and improves the soil. Fattened roots often only develop in cooler locations.

Lablab bean - a traditional bean

Lablab purpureus

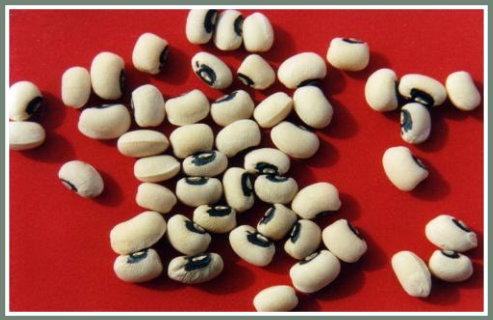


A popular climbing bean with leaves, pods, seeds and roots that can be cooked and eaten.

Cowpea - popular in some areas

A good cover crop and soil restorer

The young leaves, young pods and seeds can be cooked and eaten.

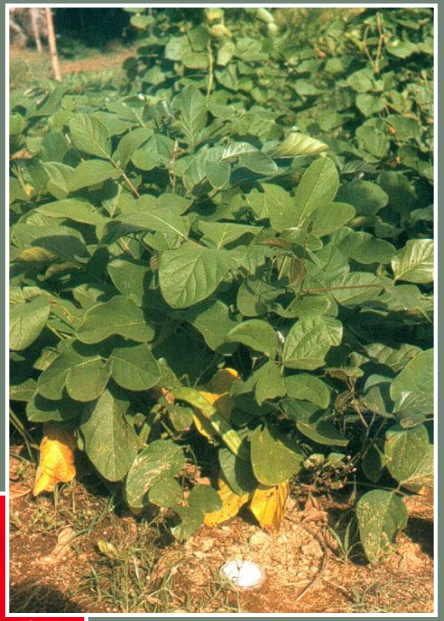


Vigna unguiculata subsp *unguiculata*

Sword bean - grown in a few places

The young pods can be cooked and eaten. The seeds should be well cooked before eating.

Canavalia gladiata



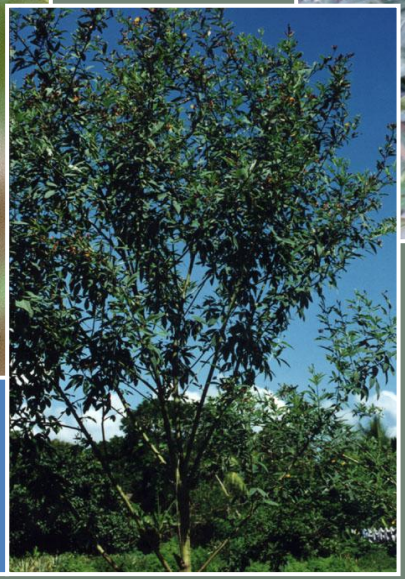
Jack bean - grown in a few places

Canavalia ensiformis

The young leaves and young pods and flowers can be cooked and eaten.
The seeds can be boiled or roasted.

Pigeon pea - a shrub with edible seeds and leaves

Cajanus cajan



The leaves, pods, seeds and sprouts can all be cooked and eaten.

Pigeon pea has deep roots that recycle nutrients and help it grow in drier places. Being a legume, it puts nitrogen into the soil.

Soybean - an introduced subtropical bean, encouraged in some places

Soybean is almost as good a food as winged bean, but it is better suited to subtropical countries, whereas winged bean suits the tropics.

Glycine max

The young pods and the ripe seeds can be cooked and eaten.

Tree ferns - cooked and eaten with meat

Cyathea hornei

Kwa'e bulu

Kurakwa

Kugui

Reve

Cyathea vittata

Cyathea brackenridgei

Young shoots of several different Asian and Pacific *Cyathea* tree ferns are cooked and eaten with meat.

Mostly, tree ferns are not planted, but just kept as garden land is cleared.

Mangrove fruit - grated, cooked and eaten

Bruguiera gymnorrhiza

Koa kini

Aongo

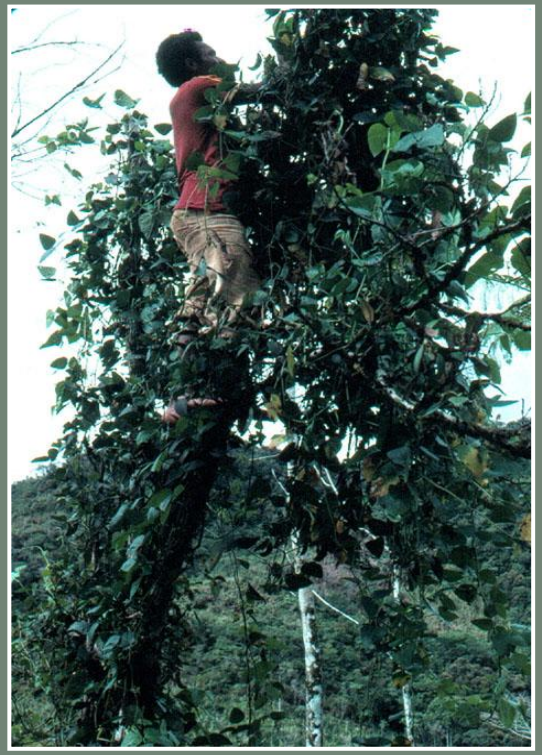
Petu

Tongo

Ko'a ania

The cooked fruit contain protein, iron and zinc

Lima bean - a traditional bean



Plants grow better in slightly cooler, hilly places.

Phaseolus lunatus

The seeds, pods and leaves are all cooked and eaten.

Snake bean - suits the lowlands

Snake bean grows easily and the leaves, pods and seeds can be cooked and eaten.

Vigna unguiculata subsp *sesquipedalis*

It is far more suitable for tropical lowland places than common bean.

Banana buds - a special vegetable

Musa spp.

The male flower buds of several kinds of bananas are shredded and cooked and eaten. They contain some protein and iron.

New vegetables in Solomon Islands

Chinese cabbage

Lettuce

Bean

Ball head Cabbage

New vegetables - tasty treats

From cooler or more temperate climates

Capsicum

Tomato

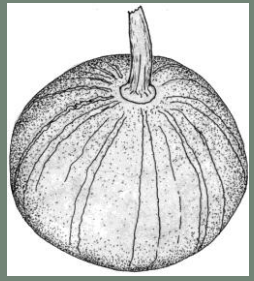
Eggplant

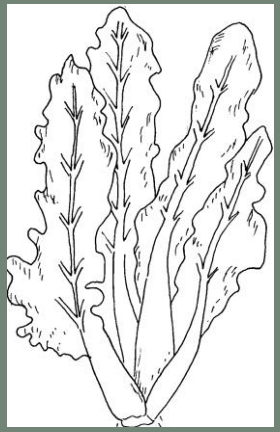
Carrot

Things you should know about new vegetables

- They often need to be grown from bought seed
- They often need fertiliser to grow well
- Many need to be sprayed to reduce insects
- They often have lower food value than local foods
- They need more care, or crops can fail

Plants for temperate places





Chinese cabbage - quick growing, but low food value

Chinese cabbage grow fast but have low food value.

Brassica chinensis

Ball head cabbage - it will survive frost, but it has little food value!

Feeding cabbage to children should be discouraged. It fills their small stomachs, but is a poor quality food.

Brassica oleracea var *capitata*

Common bean - a temperate plant, not suited to the hot humid tropics

Phaseolus vulgaris

Other beans, such as snake bean and winged bean, get fewer pests and disease problems in lowland coastal areas.

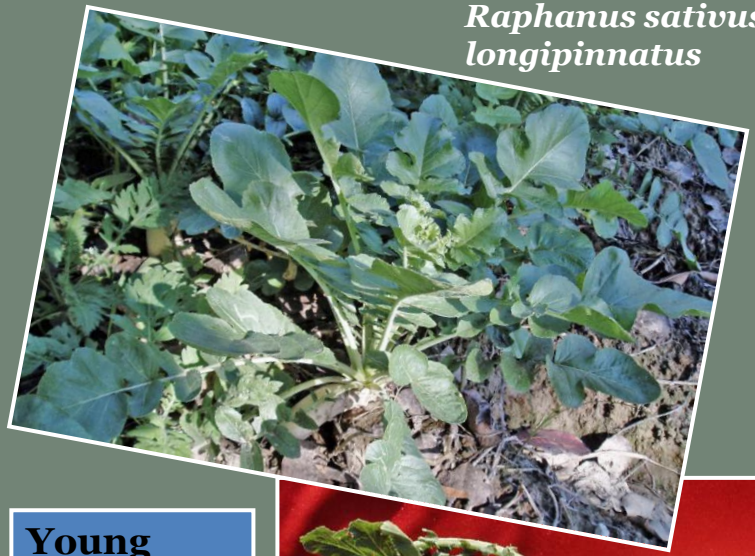
Lettuce - open leafy types have some food value

Lactuca sativa

It is best to grow the open, leafy, dark green types. Most lettuce have low food value.

Japanese radish - a tasty treat

Raphanus sativus var *longipinnatus*



Young leaves and roots can be cooked and eaten.

Eggplant - a flavouring for dishes

Solanum melongena

The fruit can be fried, grilled, baked or stewed before eating.

Tomato - used in salads and sauces

Tomato plants get their roots badly twisted by “root knot nematodes”.

Tomato leaves should not be eaten. The fruit have small amounts of nutrients.

Lycopersicon esculentum

Okra - edible leaves and fruit

Abelmoschus esculentus

Leaves are edible cooked, like slippery cabbage. The pods can be eaten cooked or used to thicken soups.

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