

# Potentially Important Leafy Greens and Vegetables in the Western Pacific

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



**FOOD PLANT  
SOLUTIONS  
ROTARIAN ACTION GROUP**

*Solutions to Malnutrition  
and Food Security*



[www.twollamas.org.au](http://www.twollamas.org.au)

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



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Two Llamas Environmental & Social Projects works with remote Indigenous communities throughout Oceania and Southeast Asia. We partnered with Food Plant Solutions to help improve nutritional intake by sharing knowledge, strengthening self-reliance and improving food security. For further information about our work, please reference: [www.twollamas.org.au](http://www.twollamas.org.au)

For further details about the program please contact us at: [info@foodplantsolutions.org](mailto:info@foodplantsolutions.org) or [info@supwildernessadventures.com](mailto:info@supwildernessadventures.com) (Two Llamas Environmental & Social Projects )

In addition to this booklet, other publications have been produced for the Western Pacific. All can be downloaded from our website - [www.foodplantsolutions.org](http://www.foodplantsolutions.org)

We encourage and welcome your support.



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

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**Other publications in this series:**

**Fruit and Nuts in the Western Pacific**

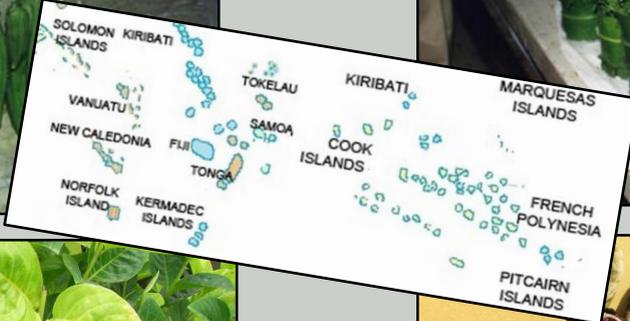
**Good Gardening and Growing Root Crops in the Western Pacific**

# Western Pacific islands of beautiful leafy vegetables

Okra



Sweet fern



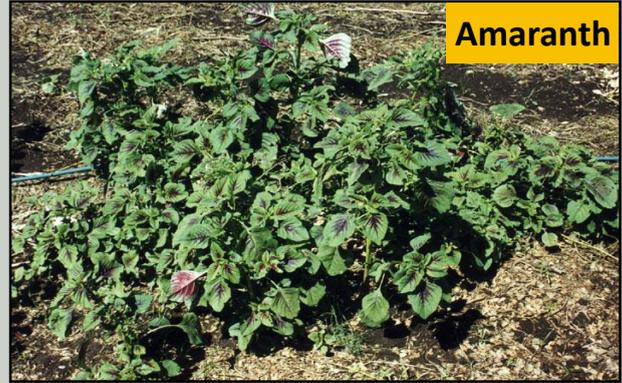
Ofenga



Bean leaves



# Leafy greens - the health foods of the nation



# 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.



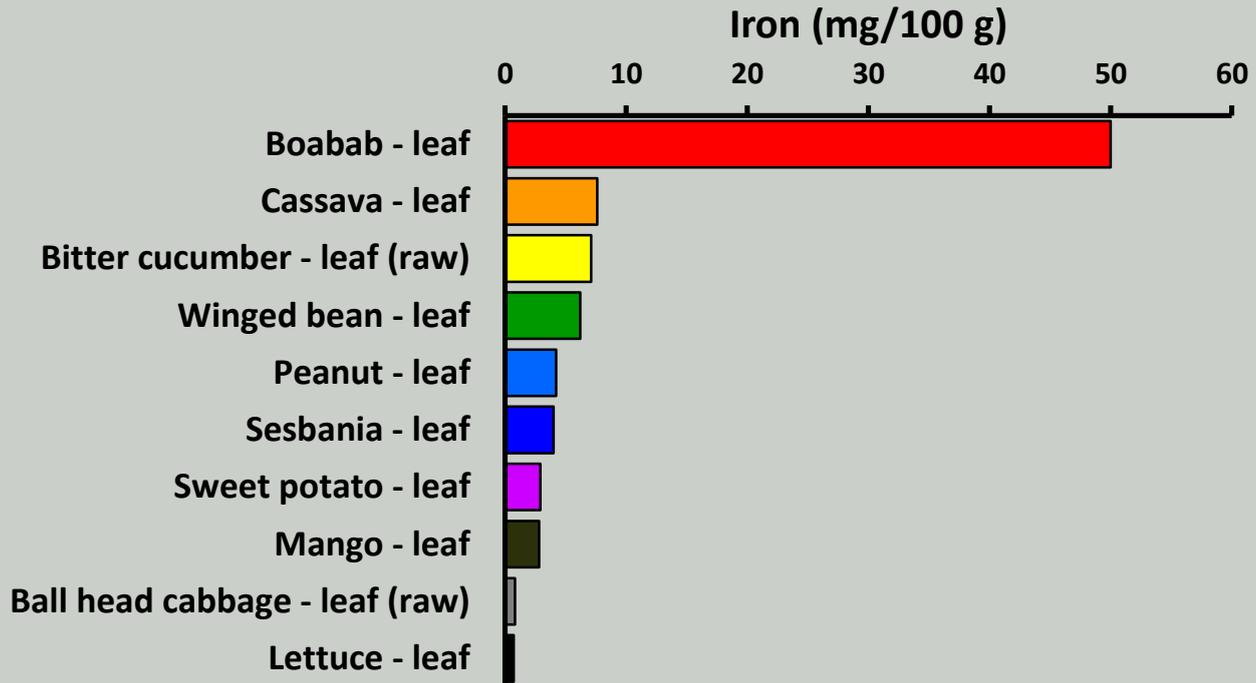
Healthy food



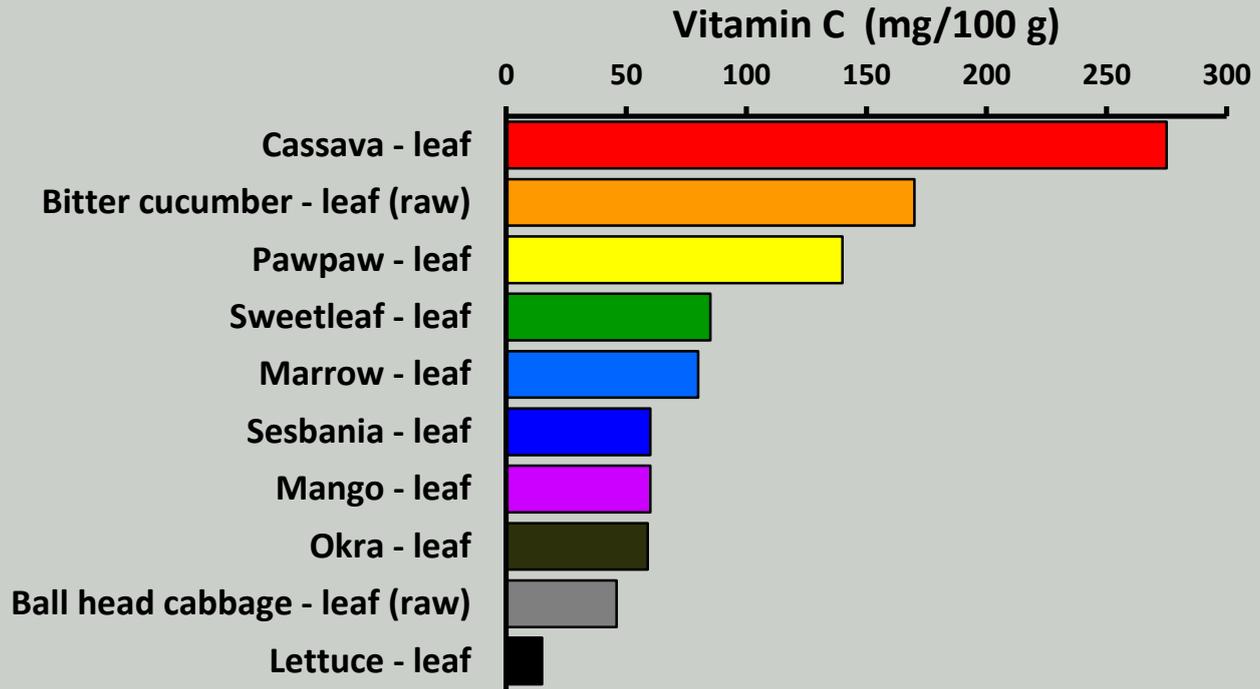
# Healthy people eat leafy greens

- 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.

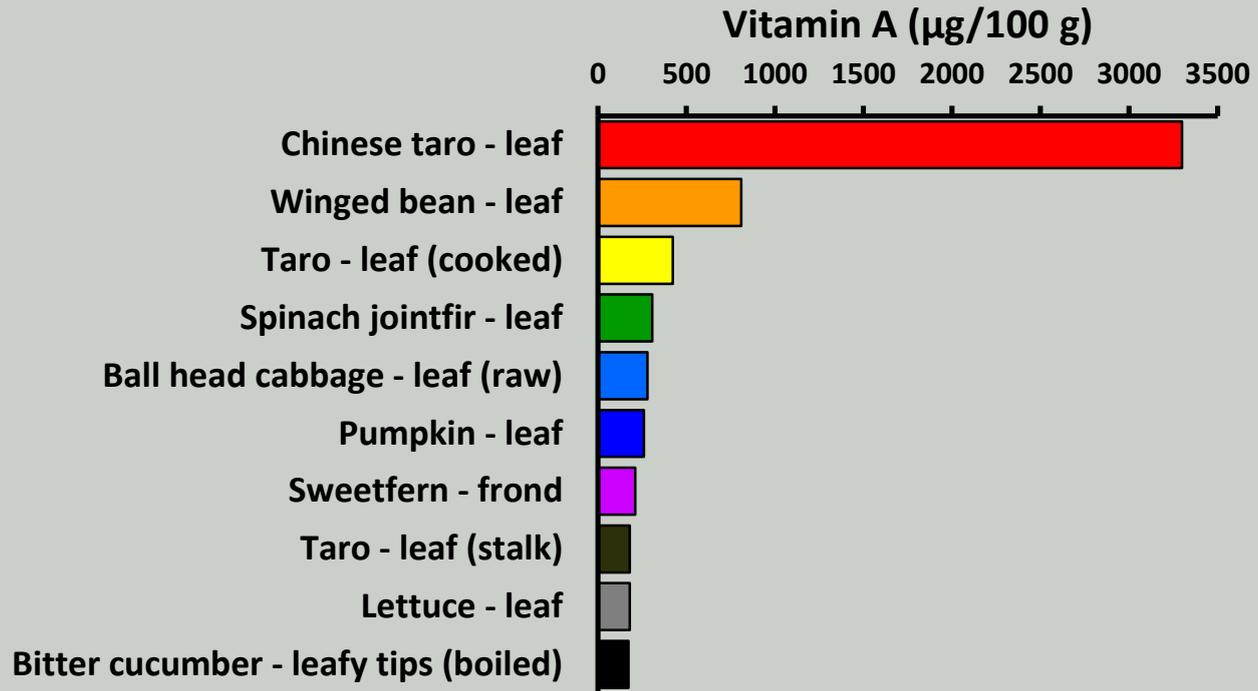
# Green leafy vegetables - Iron content



# Vitamin C for good health



# Vitamin A value of leaves



# Slippery cabbage - a delicious, highly nutritious leaf



Fry or  
steam it to  
avoid it  
going slimy.



*Abelmoschus manihot*



# Amaranth - a quick growing green

## *A home garden favourite*



Scattering seeds in old fire ashes helps plants grow well.



*Amaranthus spp*



# Chinese Taro



*Xanthosoma sagittifolium*



**A nutritious leaf that  
grows easily.**



# Swamp taro

*Cyrtosperma merkusii*



Swamp taro grows in fresh or brackish swamps.



Leaves and young flowers can be cooked and eaten.



# Sweet potato leaf

*Ground cover or climbing plant*



**Leaves are edible raw  
or cooked.**

*Ipomoea batatas*



# Spinach jointfir



*Gnetum gnemon*  
A sweet tender green.



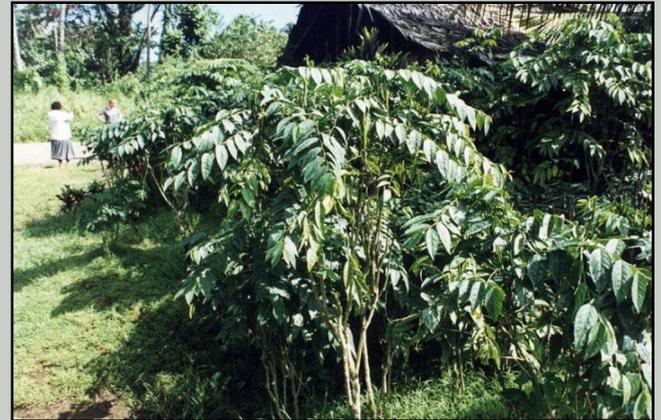
# Sweetleaf - a tasty leafy shrub

## Popular in Asia and Western Pacific



*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*



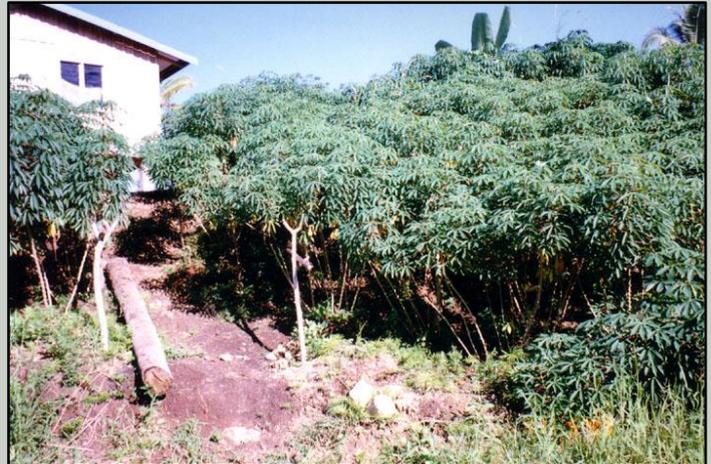
*Cucurbita maxima*

# Cassava



*Manihot esculenta*

Young leaves are edible  
after cooking.



# Sweet fern

*Popular throughout Asia and the Pacific*

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

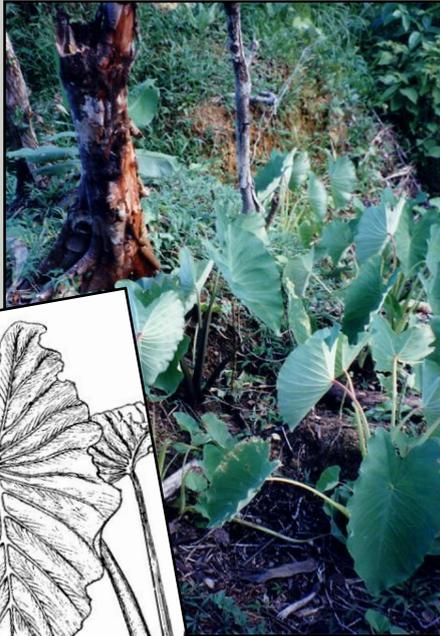


*Diplazium esculentum*

It grows in  
damp  
ground and  
along banks  
of streams.



# Taro leaf - a good quality delicacy



*Colocasia esculenta*

# Ofenga - a Malaita special



*Pseuderanthemum whartonianum*



# Leafy greens of the Western Pacific

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



**Mango**



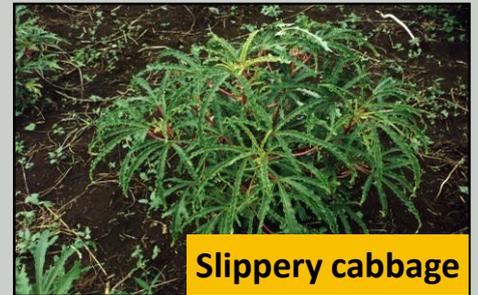
**Amaranth**



**Snake bean**



**Marrow**



**Slippery cabbage**

# Edible leaves



**Okra**



**Slippery cabbage**



**Pumpkin**



**Taro**



**Swamp taro**

# Edible leaves



**Bitter cucumber**

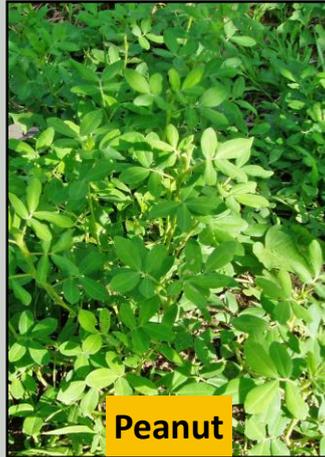


**Spinach jointfir**



**Pawpaw**

# Edible leaves



# Edible leaves



**Carrot**



**Cashew**

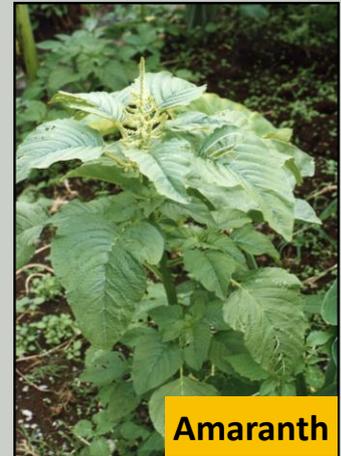


**Kapok**



**Boabab**

# Edible leaves

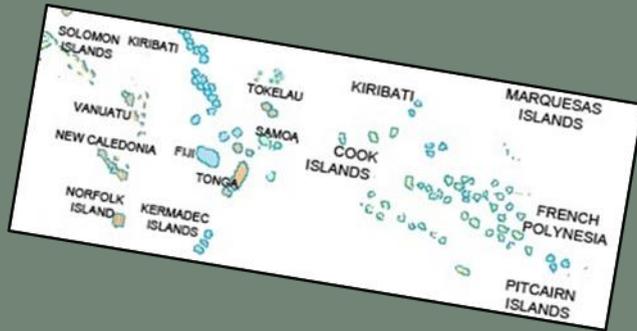


# Plant poisons

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).

# The Western Pacific islands of great vegetable foods



**Okra**



**Bitter cucumber**



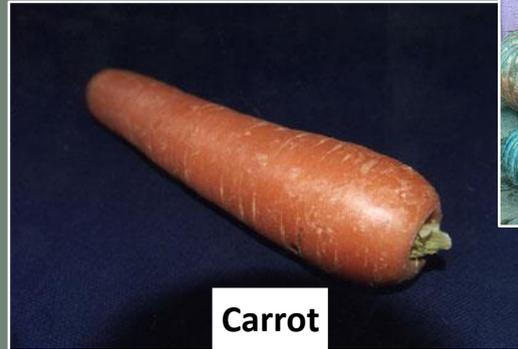
**Long pitpit**

# Vegetables for variety and nutrition



**Marrow**

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



**Carrot**

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.

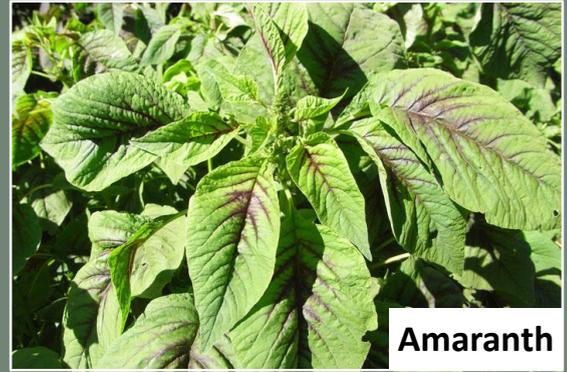


**Pumpkin**

# Vegetables - nutritious and tasty



**Long pitpit**



**Amaranth**



**Snake bean**



**Winged bean**

# Long pitpit - great in coconut milk



An attractive and  
nutritious  
seasonal food.



*Saccharum edule*



# Okra - a tropical plant

*Suited to the lowlands rather than the highlands*



*Abelmoschus esculentus*



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



# Bitter cucumber - a spicy addition



*Momordica charantia*

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

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



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

# 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*



# 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.



# Snake bean - a traditional bean



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

*Vigna unguiculata subsp. sesquipedalis*



# Horse tamarind

Young pods can be boiled and eaten.



*Leucaena leucocephala*

# Peanut – grows best in dry areas

*Arachis hypogea*



Seeds can  
be eaten  
raw or  
cooked.



# 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 to grow in drier places. Being a legume it puts nitrogen into the soil.

# 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.

# Acknowledgements

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Review, layout and formatting – Lyndie Kite, John McPhee, Rick Campbell, Melanie Bower and Karalyn Hingston.

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