

GOOD GARDENING AND GROWING ROOT CROPS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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



**FOOD PLANT
SOLUTIONS**
ROTARIAN ACTION GROUP

*Solutions to Malnutrition
and Food Security*



www.foodplantsolutions.org

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

Good gardening and growing root crops in the Philippines



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Founded in 2008, the Muravah Foundation Inc. is in Barangay Sua (Philippines), a small community of 1900+ people. Inspired by the poverty and poor living condition of the area, they have one mission and main objective “We take the people out of poverty, permanently”.

The Muravah Foundation adopts the whole community, and by doing so, is able to address the socio-economic, cultural and environmental issues and concerns of the area and not just do patch work.

The Muravah Foundation is delighted to partner with Food Plant Solutions and believes that this publication will educate the Filipino people on the nutritional value and importance of the local plants.

This publication was made possible through the generous support of the Rotary Club of Hobart and District 9830.

In addition to this booklet, other publications have been created for the Philippines, which can be downloaded from our website: www.foodplantsolutions.org

For further details about the project please contact us at: info@foodplantsolutions.org

We welcome and encourage your support.

Food Plant Solutions - A project of the Rotary Club of Devonport North,
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Good gardening and growing root crops in the Philippines

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

Contents:

Good gardening	Pages 1 - 27
Root crops	Pages 28 - 41

Other publications in this series:

Food Plants for a Healthy Diet in the Philippines

Potentially Important Leafy Greens and Vegetables in the Philippines

Fruit and Nuts in the Philippines

Good nutrition is simple

Grow and eat a wide range of food plants.

Then if a nutrient is missing from one plant, it will be included in other plants and produce a balanced diet.



Healthy Diets

All people, and especially children, should eat a wide range of food plants to stay healthy. This should include some plants from each of the food groups – energy foods, growth foods and health foods. Then each of the nutrients required by our bodies will be met in a balanced manner.



Sweet potato

Energy food

Health food



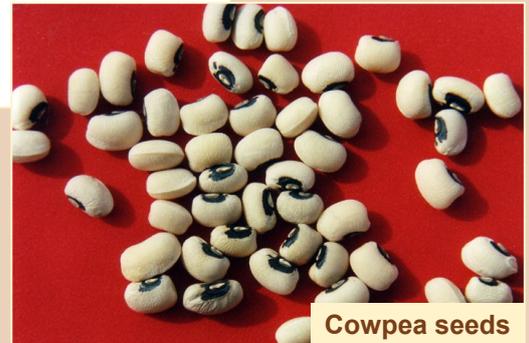
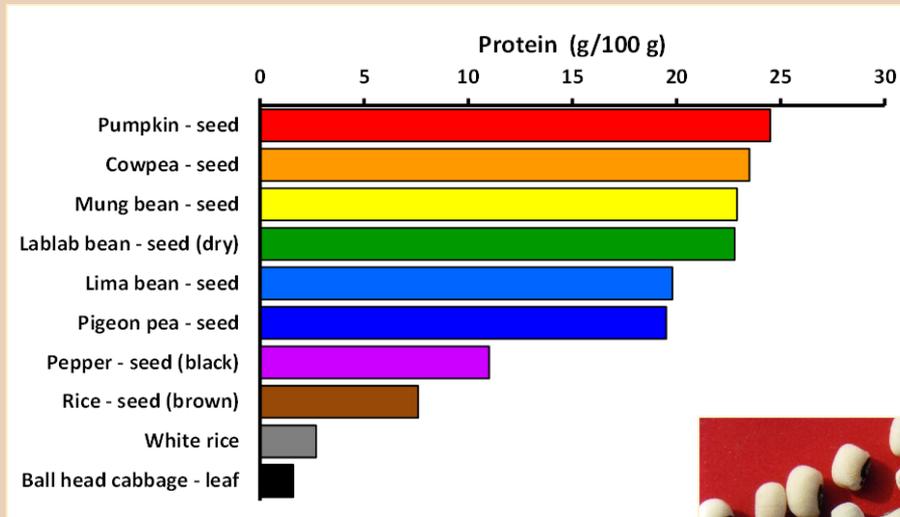
Guava



Winged bean

Growth food

Protein foods



Protein foods

Food plants add an important amount of protein (growth food) into our diets. Fish and meat can improve the quality of the protein.



Mung beans



Lablab bean

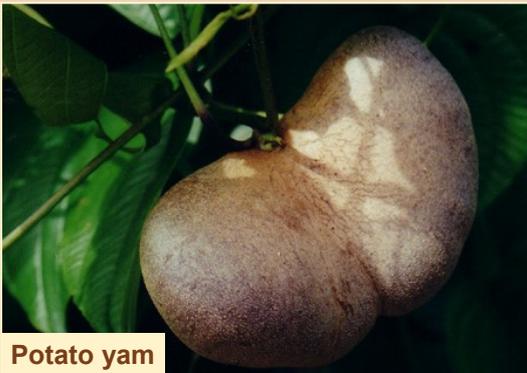
Many seeds can be roasted and eaten as snacks.

Local plants give a regular food supply

Because they are local, they will have already survived local conditions and pests.



Use a range of local or well adapted plants to get a regular supply of food.



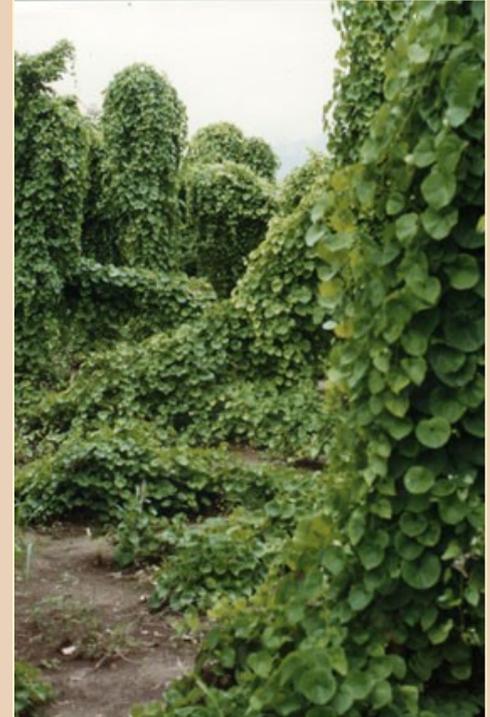
They each have different ways to survive bad conditions or bad seasons.



Agro-ecology - growing plants a natural way



Growing foods in a mixed garden is a good and simple way to reduce pests and disease.



Agro-ecology - how plants grow in nature

Plants don't grow in rows in nature.

Growing only one type of plant is not used in nature.

Lots of varieties are maintained in nature.

In nature, the right plant grows in the right place.

In nature, fruit is produced in season.

Nutrients are recycled in nature.

Natural systems are sustainable.

In nature, the soil remains alive and humus rich.

Mixed cropping is good

Amaranth and maize mixed.



Yams, bananas & vegetables.

Information on gardening

Deficiencies



Seed-saving

We all need to learn together and to share what we know.



Pests



Diseases



Are your plants healthy?

Plants show special signs when they are not growing well.

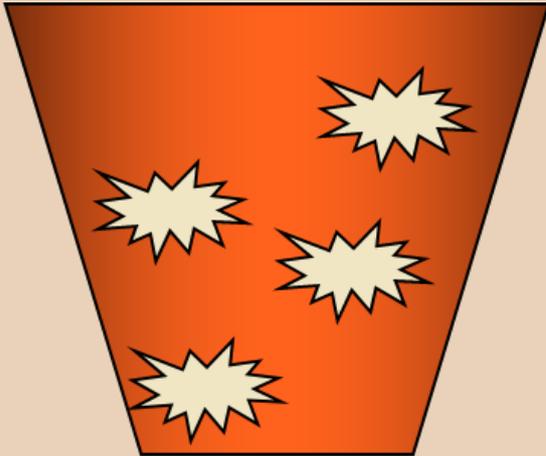
This maize leaf is indicating the plant is short of a nutrient called nitrogen. It shows a dry 'V' shape down the centre of the oldest leaves. Other grass plants show similar signs.

Nitrogen is in the air, but plants cannot use it unless small bacteria in the soil, and on the roots of bean family plants, change it into a form plants can use.



A bucket of nutrients!

If we imagine soil as being like a bucket of nutrients, then we need to fix the lowest hole, (or add the nutrient which is in shortest supply), before the bucket can carry anything more.



We can learn to recognize which nutrients are in shortest supply by looking at plants carefully.

Phosphorus



Potash



Nitrogen



Different plants grow on different soil types



Yams need fertile soil.



Taros need good soil.



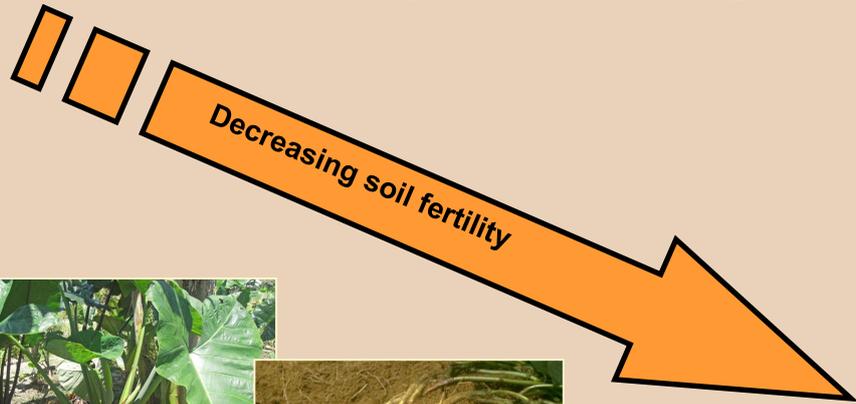
Chinese taro survives on poorer soils.



Sweet potato can grow on moderate soils.



Cassava will produce on poor soils



When nitrogen is short...

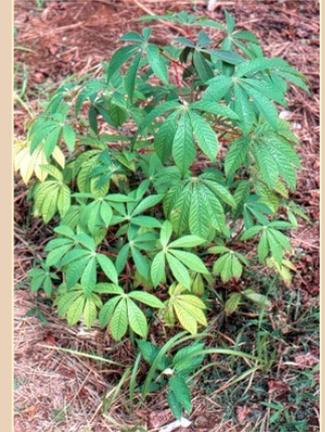


Pineapple plants turn red.

Nitrogen is important for plants to grow healthy leaves.



Grass plants have a dead 'V' shape in the old leaves.



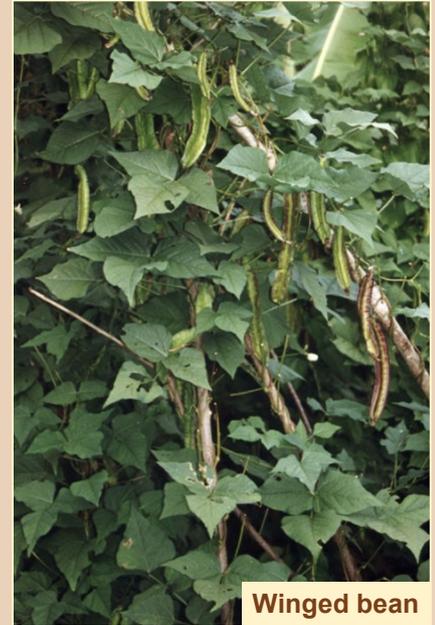
Old leaves go yellow.

Beans provide protein and restore soils

Beans have special bacteria attached to their roots that allow them to take nitrogen from the air and put it into the soil for plants to use. It is free fertiliser!



Lima bean



Winged bean

Climbing beans can be allowed to climb up corn in gardens and still get good crops of both beans and corn.

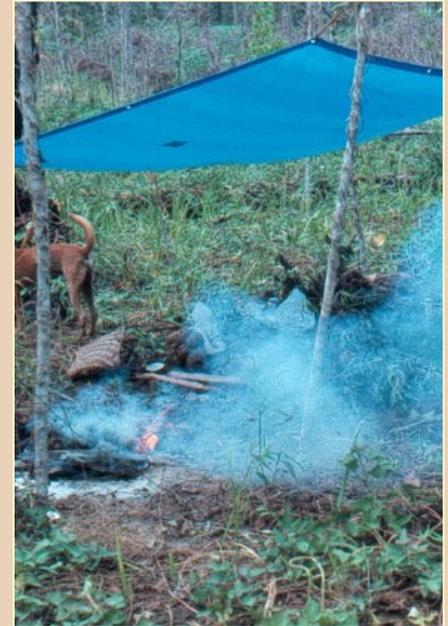
Burning loses nutrients and destroys soils

Burning is a quick and easy way to clear up a garden site, but wherever possible, plant material should be left to rot back into the soil.

This provides nutrients, and helps the bacteria and other living things in the soil that are so important for plant growth.

A soil with humus, or rotted plant material, does not lose nutrients during heavy rain.

Nitrogen (and Sulphur) get lost into the air as plant material is burnt. Other plant nutrients, like potash, remain in the ashes.



Making compost



Don't burn rubbish - compost it!

**Compost is perfect for small
backyard gardens.**



How to make compost

The rules for compost making:

- **Build a simple, open box to keep animals out.**
- **Add some old rotting material to start the process.**
- **Mix green leafy and dry plant material.**
- **Allow air to get into the compost.**
- **Keep the compost bed moist.**
- **Add anything that has been living before.**
- **If possible, turn the heap to allow it to heat up and break down properly.**

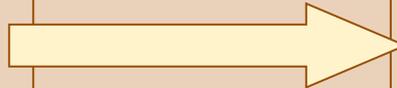
The reasons for compost

Small bacteria and other living things work hard to break down old plants and other living things into compost.



Because the bacteria are living, they need continual air and water, and a balanced diet of green and dry waste, or they die.

Living things already have plant nutrients in perfect balance for new plant growth, so it is the perfect fertiliser.



To stay healthy, soil needs lots of compost and organic matter to do all the amazing work that goes on unseen within the soil.

Compost should become hot to kill weeds and pests.

Save your own seed

Plants grown from seed that is saved locally usually get a lot less disease, as they are adapted to the area.



Air-layering

Air-layering is a special way of taking cuttings. A shallow cut is made around a small branch while it is still on the tree. Some soil and mulch is wrapped around this and covered with plastic. It soon forms roots. It can then be cut off and planted.



If a sweeter or preferred fruit or nut is found, it is best to grow it from cuttings, or air-layering, so the new tree is the same as the old.

Some diseases tell a story

Elsinoe scab on sweet potato usually tells us 3 things:

- The soil is getting poor and low in nutrients.
- The sweet potato is a variety that gets the disease more easily.
- The variety of sweet potato may have come from another country without the disease, so it has no resistance.



Some diseases tell a story

The first rule in managing pests and diseases is to grow the right plant in the right place, and to grow it well, so it can stay healthy.

Peanut rust



Leaf spot in bananas

Pests, diseases and deficiencies

Taro blight fungus washes in the rain on hot wet nights.



Wrinkled sweet potato leaves. This fungus scab gets bad when soils are poor, and also on varieties that are not resistant.

Yam anthracnose - this fungus makes leaves die off early when the leaves get damaged.



Banana diseases

Black spot

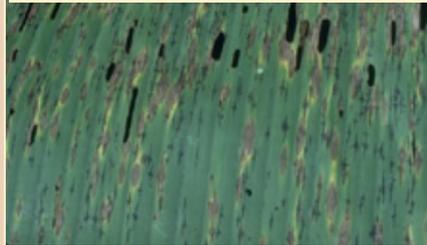


Several different fungi cause leaf spots on banana leaves, especially in wet seasons.

Sigatoka leaf spot



Black cross and leaf spot



Banana rust

Choose banana varieties that show less of these diseases.



Diamond leaf spot

Banana pests

Using a range of crops, and a mix of varieties, is normally a good safeguard against bad insect pest damage.



Banana insect pests



Banana scab moth - is a very small moth that hides from the sun under flower bracts. The grubs spoil the fruit. Pull flower bracts off and use varieties with widely spaced fruit.

Banana weevil borer - can dig into the roots of banana plants causing them to fall over.

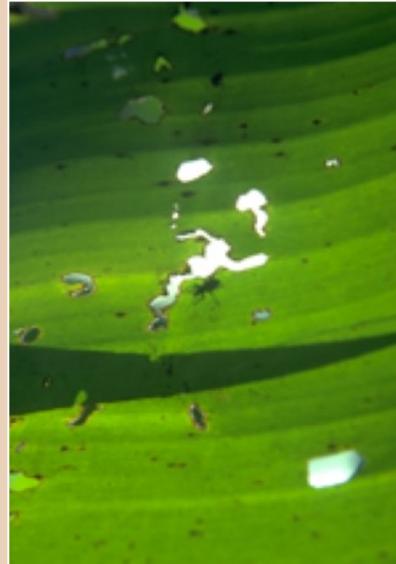


Banana insect pests

Rhinoceros beetle
- some Rhinoceros beetles and taro beetles can dig into banana stems and roots and make plants weak.



Shot hole weevil - several caterpillars, grasshoppers and weevils chew banana leaves. Grow plants well so that new leaves grow quickly.



Root crops in the Philippines

West indian arrowroot



Root crops are perfect plants for hot tropical climates.

Potato yam



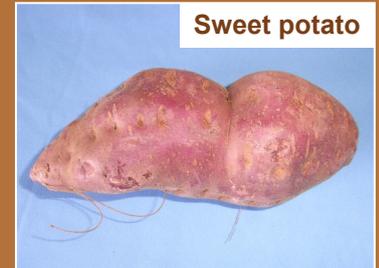
Cassava

Taro



These foods are the backbone of the country, so we need to get to know them very well.

Sweet potato

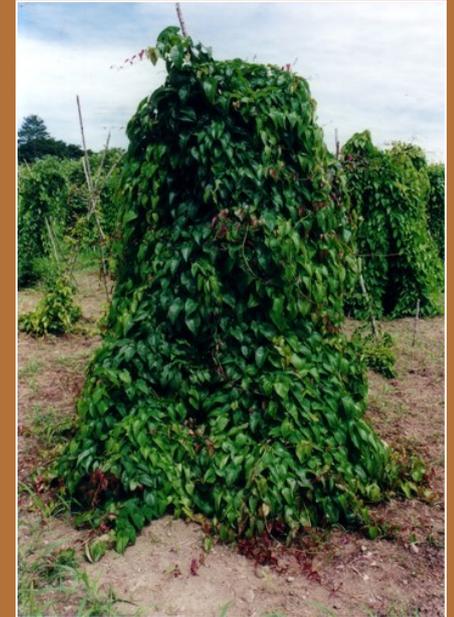


Growing yams

- Yams should be planted into a loose, friable, fertile soil.
- They need plenty of sun.
- They should have strong stakes about 2 m tall.
- A large section of the top of the old yam tuber is the best planting material.
- Yam tops are normally stored in a cool, dry place until they develop shoots.



Planting tops



A well staked yam

Yam diseases

Yam anthracnose – leaves can turn black and die early due to a fungus that gets worse in older plants, in wet seasons, and when plants get damaged.



Yam rust – yellow rust-coloured lumps can occur in some varieties and damage leaves.

Yam diseases

A virus-affected yam with small yellow leaves. It should not be used for planting material.



This obvious leaf spot due to a fungus does not cause serious damage if plants are growing well.

Growing taros



Chinese taro

Chinese taro is best grown from the top of the corm in soils that are not wet.

It takes about 9 months to be ready to eat.

It can grow in moderate shade.

Taro grows best from the top of larger corms.

It can grow in moving water and light shade.

It takes 6-9 months to be ready to eat.



Taro

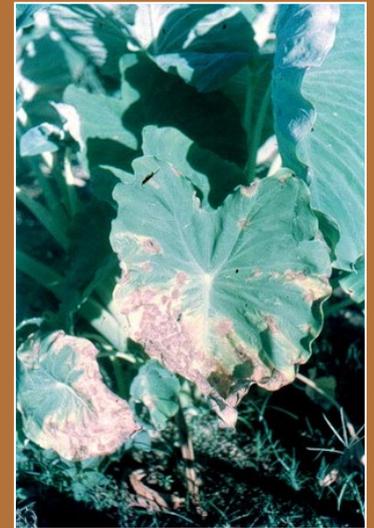
Taro diseases

Taro blight and Alomae / Bobone virus are the most serious taro diseases.



Alomae / Bobone virus

Use a mix of varieties and mixed cropping to reduce damage.



Taro blight - a devastating fungal disease.

Taro diseases



**Taro shot hole - a
minor fungal disease**

Taro mosaic virus



**Taro diffuse yellow
leaf spot**

Taro insect pests



White fly



Cluster caterpillar



Taro beetle

Taro insect pests



Aphids sucking
sap

Grasshopper nymphs



Taro hawkmoth



Growing sweet potato

Sweet potato needs:

- Air in the soil. Plant them in mounds if the soil is wet or clay.
- A position in full sun.
- A soil rich in nutrients, particularly potash (ashes).



There are many different kinds of sweet potato. Some grow quickly, but only give small amounts of food. Grow a mixture to make meals more interesting.

Growing bananas



Bananas are normally grown from suckers.



Seeded varieties are needed for breeding and crossing.



Growing cassava

Cassava is a root crop that is easy to grow, can be stored in the ground, will grow in poor soils and survive dry times. Plant woody sections of the stem (about 15cm long) in the ground at any angle.

If the soil is loose, it does not have to be dug first. Crops are usually harvested 10 - 14 months after planting. Yields of roots are lower in very acid soils and in shady places.



Cassava should always be well cooked as it contains a bitter poison called cyanide that can build up in the body and damage nerves. Cooking removes this. Leaves can be cooked and eaten.



Some problems with Cassava

Older leaves going yellow means the soil is short of nitrogen.



Leaves often get brown spots due to a fungus. It does not normally get too bad in good soils.

Like most root crops, cassava produces more food if the soils are rich in potash. Ashes from fires have potash.



Young leaves turn yellow when the soil is sour; - in limestone and coral sites.

Growing Arrowroot

The rhizomes are used for soups and sauces



Always eat other foods as well as arrowroot.

Plants are grown from rhizomes or suckers. They need a deep, fertile, well drained slightly acidic soil.

Acknowledgements

This publication was made possible through the generous support of the Rotary Club of Hobart and District 9830.

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 Karalyn Hingston

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