FOOD PLANTS FOR
HEALTHY DIETS IN NEPAL

PRACTICAL WAYS OF GROWING LOCAL
FOOD PLANTS AND DOING IT WELL

A project of the Rotary Club of Devonport North,
District 9830 and Food Plants International
www.foodplantsolutions.org
Food plants for healthy diets in Nepal

Food Plant Solutions purpose is to enable people to understand the nutritional value of local food plants through our educational materials and support services. These aim to increase the awareness of highly nutritious plants that are adapted to the local environment and hence require minimal inputs (i.e. water, fertiliser, chemicals etc.). Some of these plants are currently under-utilised but most are superior to imported foods and plants. We generally avoid the inclusion of commercially grown crops, unless they are also significant foods grown for local household consumption, as they will often require increased inputs.

Food Plant Solutions has this purpose because every minute of every day, five children under the age of five die from malnutrition.

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

Other materials for this country and other countries can be viewed at www.foodplantsolutions.org

We welcome and encourage your support.

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Using food plant resources well

The health, well-being and food security of a nation requires making the best use of all available food plant resources.
With a rich, diverse climate and a variety of soils, altitudes, and rainfall patterns it is time to discover and explore the amazing range of frequently over-looked food plants that suit the locations, and are rich in nutrients.

It’s time for Nepal to be proud of its own foods. There are many food plants in the region.
Healthy diets

To stay healthy all people, and especially children, should eat a wide range of food plants. This should include some plants from each of the food groups:

- Energy foods - e.g. sweet potato
- Growth foods - e.g. almond
- Health foods - e.g. purslane

Then each of the nutrients required by our bodies will be met in a balanced manner.
Food security

Grow a range of different food plants, planted at different times throughout the year, so food doesn’t become short in some seasons. This should include fruit and nut trees.

- Jute
- Fat hen
- Taro
- Lima bean
- Sweet potato
- Amaranth
- Finger millet
- Sweet potato
- Amaranth
- Fat hen
Iron for healthy blood

Iron is important in our blood. 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.

Soaking beans overnight before cooking them makes the iron more available.
Vitamin A for good eyesight

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.
Protein foods

Food plants can be important sources of protein, particularly if fish and meat are not readily available.
Vitamin C for good health

Vitamin C is important for helping us to avoid sickness.
Zinc for growing bodies

Zinc is particularly important for young children and teenagers to help recover from illness and be healthy.
Leafy green foods are important

Dark green leaves are an important source of iron, protein and other vitamins and minerals essential for healthy diets.

Dark green leaves contain folate which all women of child-bearing age need.

Low levels of folate at conception can lead to serious birth defects.

Everybody, especially women and children, should eat a hand full each day.
Root crops and grains are a good source of starchy staple food

Starchy staple foods are the lifeblood of Nepal.

We need to look out for pests, disease and signs that the plants are growing in poor soil.
Beans provide protein and restore soils

Legumes 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!
Everyone should eat some fruit everyday

Fruit provide minerals and vitamins and other important nutrients that everybody needs to stay healthy and well.

Good farmers plant several kinds of fruit trees.
Fruit and nut trees for around houses

Fruit and nuts to be enjoyed by all.

Some need to be planted for the future.

Many fruit are seasonal.

Some grow quickly.
Vegetables for variety and nutrition

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 are too tired or busy to go to distant gardens.

Vegetables for variety and nutrition:
- Zachhut
- Marrow
- Black fungus
- Bottle gourd
- Lotus root
Plants for garden edges

Pigeon pea

Taro

Pumpkin

Walnut
Plants for garden beds

- Chick pea
- Hogweed
- Safflower seed
- Common millet
Plants for garden beds

- Carrots
- Sesame
- Sweet potato
- Lentils
- Comb fringe grass
Plants to climb on fences

Many plants can be grown on fences around houses and gardens.

Lima bean

Pointed gourd

Lablab bean

Pumpkin

Rice bean
Acknowledgements

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This guide is based on information from the Food Plants International (FPI) database, “Edible Plants of the World”, developed by Tasmanian agricultural scientist Bruce French AO

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Notes