

# UNDEREXPLOITED LEAFY VEGETABLES

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Leafy vegetables also called as leafy greens in which leaves are eaten as vegetables. They are an important part of a healthy diet. They are full with vitamins, minerals and fiber but low in calories. Diet rich in leafy vegetables offer various health benefits including reduced risk of obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure and mental decline. Leafy vegetables ensure beautiful skin and hair as they are good source of vitamins. Dark green leafy vegetables are good sources of many vitamins (such as vitamins A, C, and K and folate) and minerals (such as iron and calcium) including fiber. The recommended dietary allowance of leafy vegetables for adult varies 100g to 125g per day. But the availability is very less. There are few leafy vegetables such as amaranthus, basella, palak, spinach and fenugreek which are cultivated commercially in India. Beyond these many more leafy greens are consumed locally in various parts of country and its cultivation is limited. Such greens highly beneficial and have nutraceutical properties. These greens should be popularised among the consumers for further cultivation and improvement.

## *Alternanthera sessilis*

It belongs to family Amaranthaceae. It is commonly known as sessile joy weed and dwarf copperleaf. It is used as vegetable especially in Sri Lanka and some Asian countries. In India it is mainly found in West Bengal, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Odisha. The leaves, flowers and tender stems are consumed as vegetables. The plant has several medicinal properties including diuretic, cooling, tonic and laxative properties. It has been used for the treatment of dysuria and haemorrhoids. In some part of the country the plant is also believed to be beneficial for the eyes, and is used as an ingredient in the making of medicinal hair oils.



## *Commelina benghalensis*

This plant belongs to family Commelinaceae. It is commonly known as the Benghal dayflower, tropical spiderwort, or wandering Jew. Plant is a perennial in nature and native to tropical Asia and Africa. In China it is used as a medicine that is considered to possess diuretic, febrifugal and anti-inflammatory effects. In Pakistan it is used against leprosy and skin diseases. In India the leaf is used as vegetable in some parts of Odisha and West Bengal. In some parts of the country it is regarded as famine food. The plant is characterized by its attractive and little bluish-violet flowers. Leaves are oval and elliptic or in some plants, it appears oblong, slightly triangular, dark-bright green in color and almost about 4-7 cm in length.

## *Glinus oppositifolius*

It belongs to Molluginaceae family. The plant species is found in India and Bangladesh. It is a non cultivated vegetable. The plant has several medicinal properties such as anthelmintic and free-radical scavenging potential, hypoglycemic and hypolipidemic effect, antioxidant activities, analgesic and anti-inflammatory potential and hepatoprotective activity and antiprotozoal activity. It is used to treat joint pain, inflammation, diarrhoea, intestinal parasites, fever, and malaria.



## *Ipomea aquatica*

It belongs to family Convolvulaceae and supposed to be originated in China. The plant is distributed in Asia, Africa and Australia. It is an aquatic or semi-aquatic, trailing or floating herbaceous plant. Leaves are elliptic or ovate to oblong; flowers are white or pale purple, solitary in nature. Young leaves and shoots are used as vegetables. Leaves are rich source of vitamins, minerals and fiber. The plant contains various essential amino acids, carotenoid and flavonoids. It has antioxidant property and very suitable for healthy diet.



## *Emilia sonchifolia*

It belongs to family Compositae. The plant is commonly known as lilac tassel flower or cupid's shaving brush, is tropical flowering specie. It is spread in tropical regions around the world and native to Asia. In India it is found in the eastern and southern states. In India it is used in folklore medicine, against inflammation, rheumatism, cough, cuts and wounds. In China, the leaves were used in fever and dysentery. It is also used as an analgesic agent and antibiotic. Plants show antioxidant, antitumor and anticarcinogenic properties. In Kerala it is considered as one of the sacred flower. The leaves and young shoots are used as vegetables.



## *Centella asiatica*

The plant belongs to Umbelliferae/Apiaceae family and commonly known as Gotu Kola, Asiatic pennywort, Indian pennywort or Spade leaf. The young leaves are used as vegetable in India, China, Sri Lanka and Africa. The plant possess several medicinal properties such as heparoactive, anticancerous, anti-diabetic, anti-depressant, wound healing, anti-oxidant, neuroprotective, anti-inflammatory, anti-fungal and anti-bacterial. The leaves, 1-3 from each node of stems, long petioled, 2-6 cm long and 1.5-5cm wide, orbicular-renniform, sheathing leaf base, crenate margins, glabrous on both sides Fig. A. Flowers are in fascicled umbels, each umbel consisting of 3-4 white to purple or pink flowers, flowering occurs in the month of April-June.

