

The Green Space Cookbook



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The Green Space education food garden

The Green Space education food garden is an initiative of the Cairns Regional Council *Green Space Our Place* volunteer program.

The operational garden has been designed to showcase food plants that grow well in our tropical climate and sustainable planting practices that can easily be adapted to small areas, such as balconies, with an emphasis on upcycling materials to create garden beds and garden features.

The Green Space doubles as a training and education space for the *Green Space Our Place* volunteers to learn valuable skills that can be used throughout the program, and in their personal lives.

If you are interested in learning more about growing your own food, or just need some inspiration, you can visit The Green Space during general operating hours, or join the Green Space Our Place volunteer program to help maintain the garden. Our volunteers reap the rewards of their efforts by sharing in the produce grown in The Green Space.

Location: Jess Mitchell Park, Greenslopes Street, Edge Hill (opposite Nature Play)

Opening hours: Wednesdays between 9.30am and 3.30pm; Fridays between 1.30pm and 3.30pm

Volunteering: find out more by searching 'Green Space Our Place' on Council's website, www.cairns.qld.gov.au, or following us on Facebook @GreenSpaceOurPlace.

The dry season

The dry season in Cairns usually occurs between May and November, although in recent years it has been starting later, often in January.

Winter crops that require cooler temperatures need to be planted early in the dry season. In September it starts to heat up with the temperature increasing through October to December. It is usually dryer through these months, so the garden needs regular watering to keep vegies thriving.

The dry season is when most Mediterranean vegetables grow well in Cairns. Start preparing your garden for dry season planting in late March, by weeding, fertilising and mulching the garden beds ready for planting in April/ May. Wait until the heavy wet season rain has finished before planting dry season crops.

The wet season

The wet season in Cairns occurs from December to April, although in recent years it has been starting in January. It is generally hot and humid and regular rain can lead to waterlogged or flooded soil. Growing in raised garden beds can help prevent the plants getting 'wet feet' and rotting, although some plants thrive in very wet soil, such as Kang Kong (water spinach) and taro.

Tropical vegetables can withstand the heat and humidity of the wet season and tend not to get attacked by bugs, making them a great option.

Try planting snake beans, wing beans, okra, taro, pumpkin, chilli, small perennial capsicum, basil, and Asian Greens; they all grow well in the wet. Ideally get your seeds in in early summer so that the plants are establishing when the rains come. Heavy rain can smash small seedlings. If you're planting in the ground, mound up the planting area with compost, if you have it, and mulch well with hay.

Crop rotation

Crop rotation is important, especially with tomatoes. If you plant your tomatoes (or capsicum, potatoes and eggplant) in the same spot each year they will deplete nutrients in the soil, and before long they will get diseased. All these plants are in the Nightshade family, requiring similar nutrients in the soil and can share similar diseases.

If you don't have a lot of space, you can try planting tomatoes in the winter of year 1, followed by snake beans for the summer (adding nitrogen to the soil) and cabbage or Asian greens for the winter of year 2 (fumigating the soil) and mung beans as green manure for the summer (dig in the plants to add carbon). Then plant tomatoes (or other Nightshades) in the winter of year 3. It is better to have a longer crop rotation such as 3, 4 or 5 years for optimum plant health, but sometimes space doesn't allow.

If you have a lot of space, you can try this 5-year crop rotation.

Year 1: Brassicas such as broccoli, cabbage and Asian greens

Year 2: Cucurbits such as cucumber, melon, squash and bitter gourd

Year 3: legumes such as beans, snow peas, peanut and mung bean

Year 4: root crops such as carrot, turnip, radish and beetroot

Year 5: Solanaceous such as tomatoes, capsicum, potato and eggplant

Companion planting can help deter pests and diseases.

Sustainable fertilisers

Worm tea

Use the juice that you drain from the bottom of your worm farm and water down to the colour of weak tea. Approximately 2 litres of worm juice in a 9-litre watering can filled up with water. Water around your plants. This tea is rich in nutrients, humus and microorganisms.

Comfrey tea

Grow comfrey in your garden for a constant source of leaves for this nutrient-rich fertiliser. The flowers also attract beneficial insects. Fill a bucket with comfrey leaves, cover with water, put a lid on and leave for a couple of weeks or more for the leaves to rot down. It gets really stinky, so it's good to have in a bucket with a lid. Dilute in a watering can to the colour of weak tea and water round your plants.

Banana peels

Bananas are full of potassium. Bury banana peels under the mulch or soil so they can compost naturally.

Coffee grounds

Coffee grounds are high in nitrogen but are very acidic. A little added to your compost heap is a good thing, but only put directly in the garden around plants that like a low PH (acidic soil).

Aibika: *Abelmoscus Manihot*

Aibika is a short-lived perennial shrub in the tropics and is native to tropical Asia. It grows 2- 3 metres high with large soft leaves that vary in shape from nearly round to sharply toothed, depending on the variety. Around 70 varieties have been classified in PNG. It's a hardy plant that thrives when it is warm and wet.

Other names: hibiscus spinach, PNG spinach, bele, tororo aoi

When and where to plant

Cuttings are best taken when the soil temperature is at least 25C. It is easily propagated by cuttings 10cm to 20cm long that are half buried in potting mix and kept moist. It prefers full sun but will grow in partial shade. Aibika needs ample water and rich fertile soil that is kept mulched. It may need staking in wet weather as the tall heavy plant can fall over.



How to eat and nutrition

The young leaves and young shoots may be eaten raw, steamed, boiled, stir-fried or added to soups. The large soft leaves can be used to wrap food in the same way as vine or cabbage leaves. As the leaves cook quickly, add them last to steamed vegies or stir fries. The leaves contain mucilage, which can give a slightly slimy texture. In the Pacific Islands it is commonly called bele and along with taro leaf spinach, it is the main green eaten in many villages, cooked in coconut milk with fish. The flowers are also edible.

Aibika is very nutritious - the leaves are high in vitamins A and C, and iron, and have 2% protein by dry weight.

Aibika dolmades

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 15-20 fresh aibika leaves | 1½ tbsp finely chopped mint |
| 3 tbsp olive oil | ½ tsp fine sea salt |
| 1 large onion, finely chopped | freshly ground black pepper |
| ½ cup (100g) brown rice, rinsed and drained | ¾ cup water |
| 2 tbsp pine nuts | 1 cup water, extra |
| 2 tbsp currants | juice of 1 large lemon |
| 2 tbsp finely chopped flat-leaf parsley | 3 tbsp olive oil, extra |
| | lemon wedges, to serve |

Method

Trim the stalks off the Ambika leaves, then blanch in boiling water for 3 minutes. Drain and rinse.

Heat olive oil in a fry pan over medium heat and cook the onion gently until soft and lightly golden, then add the rice. Cook for 1-2 minutes, stirring, then add the pine nuts, currants, parsley, mint, salt and pepper to taste. Mix in the water, cover with a lid and cook very gently for about 12 minutes until all the water is absorbed and the rice is nearly tender.



Place the leaves smooth-side-down on a clean bench, a few at a time. Put a teaspoon of filling in the middle of each leaf. Fold the stem end up, followed by the sides, then roll up tightly to form a log.

Use any torn leaves to line the base of a small, heavy-based frying pan (with a lid), then put the dolmades in the pan, in one layer, seam-side down. Pack them as close as possible to prevent them from unfolding during cooking. Cover the top with more leaves. Combine 1 cup of water and lemon juice with the remaining olive oil and pour over dolmades. Place a small plate over the top of them, to hold them in place, then top with the lid. Bring to a gentle boil, then reduce to a very low simmer and cook for 45-60 minutes, or until they are very tender.

Remove from the heat and let sit, without taking the lid off, until cool. When cool, transfer to a container, cover and chill until serving time. Squeeze over lemon to serve.

Amaranth

Amaranth grows well in the tropics, but can become weedy in the garden, so if you don't want it to self-seed, keep eating the leaves and cut off the seed heads before they mature. There are many varieties with green to red leaves, which are attractive in the garden.



Other names: callaloo

When and where to grow

Sow seed directly into the garden in a sunny spot. Sow May to August.

How to eat and nutrition

Amaranth leaves can be used in the same way as spinach. Amaranth leaves are rich in antioxidants and many vitamins and minerals. Amaranth seed can be used as a grain, and is also very nutritious.

Tambdi Bhaji – sauteed amaranth leaves

250gm amaranth leaves	¼ teaspoon turmeric powder
3 cloves garlic, chopped	2 tablespoons oil
1 onion, chopped	¼ - ⅓ cup water
⅓ cup grated coconut	Salt to taste
1-2 green chilies, chopped	

Method

Pick the amaranth leaves from the stems, wash well, drain, then chop finely. Chop onion, garlic and chilies. In a pan heat the oil then add the onions, garlic and chilies, stir and cook till the onions are translucent. Add turmeric powder and chopped amaranth leaves and some salt and stir well. Cover the pan with a lid and cook on low for about 10 minutes or until completely cooked, checking and adding some water if needed. Add the grated coconut, stir well, cover and cook for another 3 minutes. If there is any water in the dish, remove the lid and let it evaporate. Turn off heat and check the seasoning.

Serve with dahl, rice or chapatis.

Basil – *Ocimum basilicum*

There are many varieties of basil that grow well in Cairns. Sweet basil is the annual basil commonly used in pesto as it is milder. All basil flowers are good for attracting bees and pollinators to your garden.

Where and when to plant

Basil grows best in full sun. Sweet basil can be planted all year round in Cairns, but if planting in the wet season, protect small seedlings from heavy rain.

Perennial basil such as Thai basil and lemon basil are good to grow so you always have some herbs in the garden. They can be planted at any time of year and self-seed easily.



How to eat

Sweet basil is the main ingredient in pesto, and adds a distinctive flavor to salads, pasta, pizza and other dishes.

Pesto

2 cups sweet basil leaves tightly packed	½ cup grated parmesan cheese
3 tablespoons pine nuts	About ½ cup olive oil
2 cloves garlic minced	Salt and pepper to taste

Method

Put basil, pine nuts, garlic and some of the olive oil into a blender and blend till smooth, adding more oil to get the desired texture. Stir in grated parmesan and season with salt and pepper to taste. If not using immediately pack tightly into a jar, cover the top with a bit of olive oil, seal and keep in the fridge for 5 days. Serve with pasta.



Beetroot - Beta vulgaris

Beetroot is the tap root portion of the beet plant. There are many varieties, most common is deep red, but they also come in various shades of red, yellow and orange. Pickled beetroot is a traditional food in many countries. In Eastern Europe borscht (beetroot soup) is a popular dish



When and where to plant

Beetroot will grow in the winter in Cairns in full sun. Plant May to August.

Nutrition and how to eat

Beetroot is delicious boiled, roasted, raw or pickled. The young small leaves can be eaten raw, often seen in commercial salad mixes, and older leaves can be steamed or stir fried and taste similar to spinach. Beetroot is a good source of folate.

Kalkan Ketchup (beetroot pickle)

450gm red beetroot or mixed red and gold beets (*pre-cooked beetroots are fine*)

1 cup distilled white vinegar

½ cup packed brown sugar

⅓ cup chopped shallots

1 tsp kosher salt

½ tsp ground cumin

½ tsp ground coriander

½ tsp freshly ground black pepper

Method

Heat oven to 240C. Line a baking tray with enough overhanging foil to cover the beets. Halve the beets and lay them cut side down on the baking sheet, cover with overhanging foil, and bake for 45 minutes or until tender.

When cool enough to handle, peel and dice the beets and place in a medium saucepan. Add vinegar, light brown sugar, shallots, salt, cumin, coriander and pepper. Over high heat, bring the mixture to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 20 minutes. Spoon mixture into a blender and pulse until it becomes a smooth paste. Taste and add salt if necessary. Keeps for up to 3 months.

Borscht (Beetroot soup)

2 tbsp olive oil	3 bay leaves
1 onion cut finely	1 tbsp vinegar
3 large beetroots cut into matchsticks	Pinch of sugar
3 potatoes cut into chunks	3 cloves garlic, crushed
2 cups green or red cabbage, thinly sliced	¼ cup dill or parsley finely chopped
3 carrots cut into matchsticks	Salt and pepper to taste
3 tbsp tomato paste	Yoghurt for serving
1 vegetable stock cube	

Method

In a large saucepan, heat the oil and fry the onion until soft. Add carrot, cabbage and garlic and fry for a few minutes. Add beetroot and potatoes and cover with water. Add tomato paste, stock cube and bay leaves, bring to the boil and simmer for about 40 minutes until beetroot and vegetables are soft, adding more water if needed. Add garlic, vinegar, sugar, salt and pepper to taste and let the soup sit for 10 minutes so flavours can mix. Add dill and adjust any seasoning to taste and stir. Serve with a dollop of yoghurt.



Bilimbi - Averrhoa bilimbi

Bilimbi is a tropical fruit that grows in tropical areas throughout Asia. The bilimbi is closely related to the starfruit and is a domesticated species. Bilimbi fruit juice and leaves contain high amounts of oxalate, an organic acid found in plants.

Other names: belimbing, pickle fruit, cucumber tree

When and where to plant

The bilimbi tree is small and attractive reaching up to 10m; likes a sunny position and bears small reddish flowers and fruit on the trunk.



How to eat and nutrition

Bilimbi fruits are used in curries, soups, sambals, pickles, relishes and chutneys. They have a crunchy, watery flesh that is very sour. The fruit is used to add a sour taste to dishes and pairs well with fish, shrimp and pork.

The fruit are rich in vitamins A and C and potassium.

Bilimbi Curry

500g bilimbi fruit	2 fresh green chillies, seeded and sliced
2 tsp salt, plus 1 teaspoon to taste	½ tsp turmeric
2 tbsp oil	2 tsp ground coriander
Sprig of fresh curry leaves	1 tsp chilli powder
1 onion finely chopped	125ml coconut milk

Method

Slice bilimbi and put in a bowl. Pour just enough water to cover and stir in 2 teaspoons of salt. Leave for 30 minutes or longer, then rinse and squeeze as much water out as you can.

Heat oil in a pan and fry the curry leaves and onion until it starts to turn golden. Add chillies, turmeric, coriander and chilli powder and fry for 1 minute, then add the bilimbi and fry stirring for 5 minutes.

Add the coconut milk and salt. Simmer uncovered until the mixture is thick and oily. Serve with rice.

Bitter Melon - *Momordica charantia*

Bitter melon is widely used in south-east Asian cuisine. It comes in a variety of shapes and sizes. The common cultivar in China is 20-30cm long, oblong with bluntly tapering and an undulating warty surface, and is pale green in colour. The bitter melon more common in India has a narrower shape with pointy ends, with jagged bumps and ridges, and is dark green in colour. Bitter melon is usually picked green before they ripen and used in a wide variety of dishes throughout Asia.



Other names: kerala, goya, balsam pear

Where and when to plant

Bitter melon grows well in Cairns in spring and summer in a sunny position. It is a climbing vine so needs a 1-2m trellis to climb up. Sow seeds direct in the ground from August to October. It will fruit through spring and summer.

Growing tips from one of our volunteers: When the main leaves have grown to 5 or 6, cut the tips of the stems by 2-3cm. This will help the plant produce many side shoots (baby vines), which when removed, will give rise to grandchildren. As the vines grow, lightly tie them up with twine so that they become entangled in the netting.

Nutrition and how to eat

Bitter melon is very high in vitamin C and is valued throughout Asia for its bitter taste. Though it is an acquired taste, those who like it can come to crave it. It is generally consumed in its green or early

yellowing stage and is traditionally eaten in curries, soups, stir fries, in egg dishes, raw and juiced. The leaves and seeds can also be eaten.

Bitter melon curry

2 medium bitter melons	1 tbsp chopped garlic
½ tsp salt	2 tbsp curry powder
1 tsp turmeric	½ cup coconut milk
2 tbsp oil	1 stick cinnamon
1 onion finely chopped	Lime juice to taste

Method

Cut bitter melons in half lengthways and scoop out seeds. Slice into 1cm pieces and mix with salt and turmeric. Set aside for half an hour to weep out some of the bitterness. Dry on paper towels. Heat oil in a pan and fry the bitter melon until golden. Lift out and set aside.

Add the onion to the pan and a little more oil if needed and cook till soft. Add garlic and ginger and cook for a few minutes, stirring. Add curry powder and fry, stirring until fragrant, then add the coconut milk and an equal amount of water and the stick of cinnamon.

Bring to the boil and simmer for 10 minutes, then add the bitter melon and simmer for another 10 minutes. Take off the heat and add lime and salt to taste. Serve with rice.

Goya champuru

This recipe is from Okinawa, Japan. The use of spam is influenced by the American occupation of the island. You can substitute pork belly, or simply leave it out to make it vegetarian.

1 bitter melon, halved lengthways	1 tbsp sake
1 tbsp vegetable oil	1 tbsp mirin
150g Spam luncheon meat	2 eggs, lightly beaten
300g firm tofu, cut into 1cm cubes	½ teaspoon salt
2 tbsp light soy sauce	Handful of bonito flakes (approx. 5g)

Method

Using a spoon, scrape seeds and pith from the bitter melon and discard. Slice thinly and place in a colander. Sprinkle over ½ teaspoon of salt and mix well. Set aside for 15 minutes. Rinse in lots of water and drain well.

Place a frying pan on a high heat, add the oil and fry the Spam or pork belly for 4 minutes on each side until golden brown. Transfer to a plate. Add bitter melon to the pan and stir-fry for 2 minutes until softened. Add to the plate with the meat.

Add a little more oil if necessary and fry the tofu, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes or until tofu starts to brown. Return the Spam and bitter melon along with the soy, sake and mirin, to the pan. Toss to combine.

Push the ingredients to the side of the pan and pour the eggs to the other side. Stir eggs until starting to set, then stir through the other ingredients. Add bonito flakes, toss to combine and season to taste. Serve topped with extra bonito flakes.



Brazilian Spinach – *Alternanthera sissoo*

Brazilian Spinach, *Alternanthera sissoo*, is a low-growing perennial spinach which forms a spreading mound to 30cm high. It is very hardy and grows prolifically in Cairns, and is a great source of greens all year round.

Other names: sissoo, poor man's spinach

When and where to plant

Plant cuttings 15cm-20cm long, three or four to a hole. Strip the leaves off the bottom half of the stems and bury to half their length, keep moist. It is shade tolerant, so can be planted in full sun to medium shade at any time of year. It will tolerate most soils but prefers a moderate to rich loam and dislikes waterlogging.



How to eat and nutrition

Brazilian spinach is a good tasting leafy green without the slimy or mucilaginous texture that some people dislike about aibika or Ceylon spinach. It's a bit tough for salads, but you can use very new leaves raw if you wish. Good steamed or in stir fries.

Brazilian spinach has a high fibre and folic acid content and contains vitamin C, iron, calcium and beta-carotene.

Brazilian spinach parcels

Large amount Brazilian Spinach
6 spring onions
Olive oil

1 tsp ground cumin
Small block Danish feta
Frozen puff pastry

Method

Pick the leaves from the stems until you have a large colander full and wash well. Put in a saucepan with 3cm water and boil for 10 minutes. Drain and squeeze water out, then chop finely.

Chop spring onions, including all of the greens and heat a bit of olive oil in pan. Fry onions until soft and add cumin. Mix spinach, onions and break in feta. Mix well. Cut frozen pastry sheets into four, put a heaped spoonful of mix in and squeeze pasty to form a parcel/ triangle.

Place in oven at 180C for 20 minutes.

Saag paneer (Spinach curry)

Pick a big bunch of Brazilian spinach, remove leaves and discard stems. Wash well. Put in a large saucepan and cover with water. Bring to the boil and simmer for about 10 minutes. Tip into a colander to drain. When cool squeeze out extra water. You can freeze like this for later use.

1 tsp turmeric	4 cloves garlic crushed
½ tsp cayenne pepper	1 green chilli chopped (remove seeds for less heat)
Salt	1 tsp garam masala
4 ½ tbsp olive oil	2 tsp ground coriander
500g cooked spinach	1 tsp ground cumin
350g paneer (Indian cheese), cubed	½ cup plain yoghurt
1 onion finely chopped	
3 cm piece of ginger grated	

Method

In a bowl, whisk together 3 tablespoons of the oil, turmeric, cayenne and 1 teaspoon of salt. Add the paneer cubes and let marinate while you are getting the other ingredients ready.

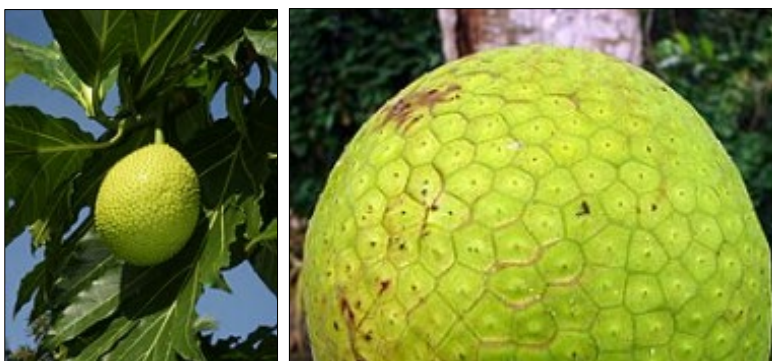
Puree the spinach in a food processor until smooth, alternatively you can chop very fine with a knife. Put a large pan on the stove over a medium heat and add the paneer and its oil. Fry until golden turning carefully and remove to a plate.

Add the remaining 1 ½ tablespoons of oil and add the onions, ginger, garlic and chilli and sauté for 15 minutes until it is evenly toffee coloured. Stir often and add a couple of tablespoons of water if it starts to burn. Add the garam masala, coriander and cumin and if you haven't already, add a couple of Tbsp water to keep from burning. Cook for a further 3-5 minutes until spices smell cooked. Add the spinach and stir well. Add a little more salt and ½ cup water and cook for 5 minutes with the lid off.

Turn the heat off and add the yoghurt a little at a time to keep it from curdling. Once the yoghurt is well mixed in, add the paneer. Turn the heat back on and cook on low for 5 minutes until everything is warmed through. Serve with rice.

Breadfruit - *Artocarpus altilis*

Breadfruit trees are an attractive looking tree growing throughout tropical regions. They grow up to 25m and are high yielding, bearing 50 plus oval fruits weighing 0.5-5kg.



Nutrition and how to eat

Bread fruit is a staple food in many tropical regions. Mostly, the green, unripe fruit is eaten as a vegetable with a taste like potato.

Breadfruit is mainly eaten as a carbohydrate and has little other nutrition. Unripe breadfruit is often boiled with coconut milk, made into curry or fried as chips.

Breadfruit cooked with coconut milk

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 3 cups peeled and sliced breadfruit | 1 tbsp fresh ginger |
| Big bunch pak choy or other Asian green – washed and chopped | 2 star anise |
| 1 large can coconut milk | Salt to taste |
| 2 tbsp grated fresh turmeric | |

Method

Put oil in a large saucepan and fry grated turmeric, ginger and star anise for a couple of minutes. Add breadfruit slices and fry on a low heat for a few minutes each side. Add the greens and coconut milk and simmer for 10 minutes, or until breadfruit is soft, add a bit of water if needed. Add salt to taste and serve with rice.

Breadfruit chips

Peel breadfruit and cut into thin slices. Rub with salt and turmeric (if desired) and toss generously with olive oil. Either pan fry or put in a roasting pan in a hot oven and cook till a bit crispy.

Broccoli - *Brassica oleracea* var. *Italica*

Broccoli can be grown in Cairns during the winter months, but you must get it in early when the weather starts to cool for it to head well. Success is a bit hit or miss depending on how cool the winter is.

Where and when to grow

Plant seedlings out in May or June when the weather has cooled. Plant in full sun in soil with plenty of compost.

Nutrition and how to eat

Broccoli is a rich source of vitamin C and vitamin K. When eaten raw, it contains moderate amounts of B vitamins. It can be eaten raw, steamed or roasted, in salads, stir fried or in soups



Broccoli and stilton soup

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 2 tbsp olive oil | 1 knob butter |
| 1 onion finely chopped | 1l vegetable stock |
| 2 sticks celery, sliced | 1 head broccoli, chopped, including stalk |
| 1 leek, sliced | 140g stilton or other blue cheese |
| 1 medium potato, diced | |

Method

Heat oil in a large saucepan and fry onion. Cook on a medium heat until soft. Add celery, leek, potato and a knob of butter. Stir and cover with a lid for 5 minutes. Pour in the vegie stock and add the broccoli. Cook for 15 minutes until all the vegetables are soft.

Transfer to a blender and blitz until smooth. Crumble the stilton in, stir and serve.

Burdekin plum - *Pleiogynium timorense*

Burdekin plum is a rainforest tree which grows to 20 metres. The dark purple fruit is edible when ripe. Indigenous Australians buried the fruit underground to ripen. The fruit can be eaten raw or used in jams, jellies and preserves.

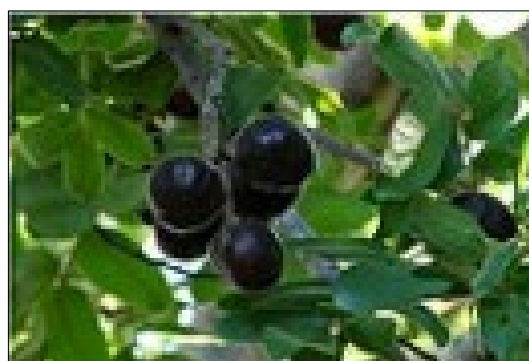
Other names: tulip plum, guybalum

Burdekin plum jam

Ripen Burdekin plums in a brown paper bag until slightly soft.

Wash and put in pan, cover with water and boil for an hour or so. The fruit probably won't fall off the stone, so when cool, cut as much flesh of the stone as you can. Top up water and boil for another half an hour, making sure they don't boil dry. Strain.

Measure 1 cup liquid to 1 cup sugar and bring to boil.



Simmer for 15 minutes and test if it will set by putting a spoonful on a plate in the freezer. Keep simmering until it sets to desired consistency.

Bottle in sterilised jars.

Cabbage - Brassica oleracea var. Capitata

Cabbage can be grown in Cairns, but it takes a cold winter to get a good head. Plant early in the winter when the weather starts to cool for the best chance. There are many different varieties of cabbage. Green or red smooth leafed cabbage and Chinese wong bok are worth trying in the tropics, but probably won't produce the firm head they do in cooler climates.



There are many different loose-leaf Asian cabbage varieties that do very well in the tropics, such as bok choy, that have a much longer planting season.

Where and when to plant

Plant out seedlings in May or June in full sun.

Nutrition and how to eat

Cabbage is a rich source of vitamin C and vitamin K and dietary fibre. It is eaten in many ways, such as, pickled, fermented, steamed, sautéed, stewed and roasted.

Sauerkraut

Sauerkraut is fermented and full of probiotics which promote a healthy gut.

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| 8 cups finely shredded red or green cabbage | 3 tbsp grated ginger |
| 2 tsp salt | 3 tbsp grated turmeric |
| 1 beetroot | 4 cloves garlic, minced |
| 3 carrots | |

Method

Sterilise any equipment you will be using for fermentation. An easy way is to pour boiling water into jars and lids, leave for a few minutes and drain and dry thoroughly.

Put shredded cabbage in a large mixing bowl, add 2 teaspoons salt. Wash your hands and massage cabbage for 10 minutes until it starts to soften and shrink in size. Add all other ingredients and continue to massage for five minutes until thoroughly combined.

Pack sauerkraut into clean, dry jars and push down firmly to get rid of any air bubbles. The liquid should come up to cover the vegetables. If it doesn't you can top up with a little filtered water, but you shouldn't need to. Make sure there is about a 4cm gap between the contents and the lid so that it has room to expand. Seal with lids.

Place jars on a tray (just in case they spill over) out of direct sunlight to ferment. Ambient temperature above 18C is ideal. Open the jars once a day to release pressure. You should see bubbles rise when you open the jars. Press down with a sterilised spoon to make sure vegetables are completely covered by the liquid. It takes about a week to ferment in Cairns, maybe a bit longer in winter. The longer it sits and ferments, the tangier it gets, so sample occasionally with a clean utensil to test and see if it is the right stage for you.

Once it has reached the desired tanginess, cover securely and transfer to the fridge where it will keep at least 3 months and up to 6 months.

When serving, don't double dip to avoid contamination.



Canistel - *Pouteria campechiana*

The canistel tree is native to Mexico. The shape and size of the fruit is highly variable depending on the cultivar. The flesh has a creamy texture, with a rich flavour reminiscent of egg custard. The fruit may contain one to six large brown seeds. The ripe fruit is an intense yellow colour, and eventually softens and drops from the tree. The fruit needs to fully ripen on the tree to reduce its astringent properties.

Other names: cupcake fruit, tiesa

How to eat and nutrition:

Eaten fresh the Canistel has the texture of hard-boiled egg yolk. The ripe flesh can be made into jam, pancakes and flour. It can be blended with milk and other ingredients to make a shake or made into ice cream.

Canistel scones

- 1 canistel
- 200ml milk
- 500g self-raising flour
- 40g butter, softened

Method

Peel and de-seed the canistel, place in a bowl and mash.

Add a little milk and stir until smooth. Then add the sifted flour and blend, adding the remaining milk as required.



Work the softened butter into the dough on a floured board. Pat to a thickness of 20mm. Cut scones to size and place on a baking tray lined with baking paper.

Bake at 250C for 12 minutes.

NOTE: One of our volunteers made these scones and suggested adding a little sugar to the recipe.

Capsicum - Capsicum annuum

Capsicum is native to the Americas and there are many varieties that grow well in Cairns. Sometimes known as bell peppers, they register zero on the Scoville scale (used to measure the heat of chillies). Most pepper varieties within the annuum species do not have any heat. Capsicums are in the Nightshade family so should be rotated around the garden in the same group as tomatoes to reduce the chance of disease. The small perennial capsicum is well suited to fruit throughout the wet season.



Where and when to grow

Grow capsicum in full sun. Plant large varieties from April to September. The small perennial capsicum can be planted all year round. They don't like to be waterlogged.

Nutrition and how to use

Capsicums are very nutritious, especially when eaten raw. They contain high amounts of vitamin C, vitamin A and antioxidants. They can be eaten raw, stir-fried, baked or stewed.

Roasted Capsicum Soup

5 red or yellow capsicums
4 tomatoes
4 cloves garlic, unpeeled
1 onion, chopped
3 sticks celery, chopped

1 tbsp olive oil
1 vegetable stock cube
1 tsp brown sugar
1 tsp dried oregano
Salt to taste

Method

Cut capsicum in half and take out seeds, put on a baking tray. Cut tomatoes in half and add to the baking tray, cut side up, and sprinkle each half with a little bit of sugar, salt and oregano. Add unpeeled garlic. Roast in 200C oven for 25 minutes or until soft; it is fine if the capsicum skins go a bit black.

Put oil in a large pan and fry onion till soft, add celery and fry for a couple of minutes, then add ½ to 1 cup water and 1 stock cube. Put a lid on and simmer till



celery is soft. Add roasted capsicum, tomatoes and squeeze out the garlic. Blitz with a stick blender or jar blender until smooth.

Chilli - Capsicum frutescens

Chillies, you either love or hate them, but those who love them can come to crave the chilli hit. There are many varieties of varying spiciness, and they all grow very well all year round in the tropics.

Where and when to grow

Grow chillies in full sun all year round.

Nutrition and how to use

The burning sensation experienced to various degrees when eating chillies is caused by capsaicin. Interestingly, birds are not affected by capsaicin, which is why they can eat birds eye chillies (very hot) to their hearts content and spread the seeds around everywhere, making them quite weedy (but pretty). The most heat in a chilli is in the internal membrane that holds the seeds. If you want to reduce the heat when using chillies, cut in half, and with a sharp knife, remove the membrane and seeds, and just use the flesh.

Chillies are high in vitamin C, vitamin A and antioxidants, but given that it is hard to eat very many of them you are better to turn to capsicum for the health benefits.

Heat in chillies is measured by a rating on the Scoville scale. It measures the concentration of capsaicinoids and was created by the American pharmacist Wilbur Scoville in 1912.

Sweet Chilli Jam

Makes 1 ½ cups

6 long, red, fresh chillies or 18 small ones (deseeded if you don't like it too hot)

1 brown onion, coarsely chopped

2 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped

125ml water

450g sugar

80ml white wine vinegar

1 lime or lemon, juiced

1 tsp fish sauce (soy sauce for vegetarian)

Method

Sterilise clean jars by pouring boiling water in jar and lid. Dry thoroughly. Put chillies, onion, garlic and water in food processor and blitz until finely chopped.



Put in a saucepan with sugar, vinegar, lemon or lime juice, and fish sauce and bring to the boil, stirring until the sugar has dissolved. Once boiling, reduce heat to simmer for around 40 minutes, stirring occasionally. Test by putting a spoonful on a plate in the freezer for a couple of minutes. If it sets to desired consistency (can be sauce or jam) pour hot jam into jars and seal.

Refrigerate after opening.

Green chilli jam

1 ½kg long green chillies	120ml lemon juice
1 ½kg raw sugar	30g garlic, peeled
500ml cider vinegar	1 tbsp salt
400g brown onions, roughly chopped	

Method

Cut the tops off the chillies and put in a blender with the onions and garlic. Blitz until all pieces are the size of chilli seeds. Put all the ingredients into a large pan and bring to a simmer. Continue to cook, stirring often until it has a thick, glossy consistency. Bottle into sterilised jars while hot.

Green chilli chutney

250g green chillies (long fat ones are good as not so hot)

10 cloves garlic, sliced

3 tbsp olive oil

1 tsp cumin seeds

½ tsp turmeric

Salt to taste

1 tsp vinegar

Method

Cut chillies in half longways and remove seeds (good to wear gloves so you don't get burning hands).

Heat oil in fry pan till hot and add chillies. Cook till they start to blister, then add garlic, cumin seeds and turmeric and turn the heat off. Cool completely.

Put in a blender with vinegar and salt and blend to a coarse texture. Store in an airtight jar in the fridge. Keeps for at least a month.

Serve with curry or stir fry and rice.



Chilli Pickle

This pickle is delicious, choose chilli varieties depending on desired heat!

500gm chillies cut in 2cm pieces	30ml white wine vinegar
1 tbsp salt	3 large cloves garlic, chopped
1 tsp turmeric powder	1 tsp fenugreek
1 cup peanut or sunflower oil	1 tsp nigella seeds
2 tsp black mustard seeds	

Method

Toss the chillies in the salt and turmeric, cover and leave in the fridge for 24 hours. Put the mustard seeds in the vinegar and soak for 12 hours, then put in blender with the garlic and blend to a paste. Heat the oil in a pan and add the fenugreek and nigella seeds until fenugreek starts to turn brown, then carefully add the blended mixture. Add the chillies and any liquid that has come out of them. Cook over a gentle heat until the oil rises, and the chillies have started to soften. Spoon into sterilized jars.

Collard Greens – *Brassica oleracea Acephala* Group

Collards are vigorous, non-heading cabbages which grow well in Cairns in the winter. They are heat and cold tolerant and slow to bolt.

Where and when to plant

Plant seeds March - July. Grow in a sunny spot with plenty of compost. Take off lower leaves to eat and the plant will continue to produce for a long period.

Nutrition and how to eat

Collards can be eaten cooked and raw in much the same way as cabbage. If eating raw, remove the stalk and shred finely. Collard greens are an excellent source of calcium, folate, vitamin A, vitamin C and vitamin K. They are also high in fibre and antioxidants.



Dirty rice and collard greens

1 tbsp butter	2 fresh red chillies, seeds removed and chopped
1 tbsp olive oil	½ teaspoon salt
2 cloves garlic, minced	2 cups finely chopped collard greens
1 onion, chopped	Black pepper
1 cup basmati rice	2 cups vegetable stock
2 tbsp sweet paprika (smoked paprika, or a mix of both)	

Method

In a heavy bottom saucepan melt the butter with the oil. Add onion and garlic and sauté until cooked. Add the rice and stir to coat with the oil. Add the vegetable stock, paprika, chilli and salt. Bring to a simmer and add the collard greens. Turn the heat to low, cover with a lid and simmer for 15 minutes, checking occasionally and adding a little more water if necessary. When rice is well cooked, and water absorbed, remove from the heat and add black pepper to taste.

Cucumber - Cucumis sativus

Cucumbers grow well in Cairns in summer and early winter. They are vines so do best when supported by a trellis, which allows the fruit to hang. If fruit is resting on the ground it can rot. There are many varieties, which can be short, long, green, yellow, more or less seedy, with tough or soft skin.



Where and when to plant

Suyo long is a great variety for Cairns, a prolific cropper with long cucumbers similar to continental. Plant in full sun early in the winter (May-June) for a good crop. Cucumbers can grow all year round in Cairns, but the best time to plant is March to September.

Nutrition and how to eat

Cucumbers are mostly water and are a refreshing vegetable to eat raw. Use in salads and dips. They can be preserved by pickling (gherkins)

Cucumber and yoghurt dip

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| 1 large cucumber grated | 2 tsp lime juice |
| 6 large kaffir lime leaves – cut in strips as fine as you can with scissors | Handful of mint leaves, chopped |
| 250g Greek yoghurt | 1 clove garlic, crushed |
| | Salt and black pepper to taste |

Mix all ingredients together and season to taste. Serve with crackers.

Chinese cucumber salad

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| 1 large cucumber or 3 Lebanese cucumbers | 1 tsp vinegar |
| 1 clove garlic crushed | 1 tsp sugar |
| 2 tbsp soy sauce | ½ tsp salt |
| 1 tbsp sesame oil | ½ tsp cracked black pepper |

Method

Cut the cucumber in half lengthways and then in half again. Cut into 2cm chunks. Whisk all the rest of the ingredients together and add the cucumber to the dressing. Mix well, cover and put in the fridge for 1-2 hours for the flavours to combine. Serve with rice or as a side salad.

Salad Provencale

1 large onion
About ½ cucumber
Several tomatoes
1 small red capsicum
1 small green capsicum
Lettuce leaves.

Dressing

1 clove garlic crushed
3 tbsp olive oil
1.5 tbsp lemon juice
Salt and pepper
A pinch of sugar

Method

Peel and thinly slice onion. Slice cucumber and tomatoes. Dice pulp from both capsicums discarding core and seeds.

For the dressing, blend olive oil and lemon juice with the crushed garlic, salt, pepper and sugar.

Arrange the salad ingredients on a bed of lettuce leaves and top with the dressing.

Eggplant - *Solanum melongena*

Eggplants grow very well in Cairns and will give you fruit all year round. Though mostly grown as an annual or biannual, sometimes a plant will keep on going for a few years. There are many different varieties of different colours, shapes and sizes, from green 'Thai pea eggplant', white egg shape, long and slim in black, white, purple and green, 'Turkish orange', and big black 'supreme'. They all taste similar yet different, so worth trying a variety.



Where and when to plant

Plant eggplant in full sun. Raise seedlings in pots and then plant out, or you can buy grafted eggplants from a nursery for a stronger plant. Eggplants can be planted at any time of the year in Cairns.

Nutrition and how to eat

While eggplant isn't the most nutritious vegetable it does have potassium and is high in fibre. It is delicious roasted, fried or steamed, and in curries or stews. It can also be preserved into pickles and chutney.

Eggplant kasundi

The beauty of this pickle is all the spices, so don't skimp! It is quite spicy, so if you don't like too much heat, swap some of the Kashmiri chilli powder for extra sweet paprika.

1kg eggplant	2 tbsp turmeric powder
1 bulb garlic	4 tbsp sweet paprika
4 tbsp Kashmiri chilli powder	1 cup malt vinegar
3 tbsp ground cumin	1 ½ cups grapeseed oil
1 ½ tbsp black mustard powder	¾ cup brown sugar
2 tbsp whole fenugreek seeds	3 tbsp salt

Method

Peel and chop the garlic. Cut the eggplant into 1cm cubes. Mix all the powders together. Heat the oil in large heavy bottom pan on a medium heat, add the garlic, when slightly coloured add the spice mix and stir and cook for a few minutes. Add the eggplant and stir. Add the sugar, salt and vinegar and stir until the sugar has dissolved. Cook for about 45 minutes. Pack into sterilized jars while hot and seal. Store in a cool spot and refrigerate after opening. Stores well.

Miss Shur-Lee's eggplant pickle

1kg eggplant (3-4 medium sized)	½ cup honey or sugar
4 tsp garlic, chopped	1 ½ tsp ground turmeric
12 fresh chillies, minced	¾ cup apple cider
3 tsp ginger, chopped	vinegar
1 ½ cup oil	3 tsp salt
2 tsp black mustard seeds	3 tsp garam marsala

Method

Cube eggplant. Mix garlic, chilli, ginger, turmeric and mustard seeds together with a little oil in a bowl.

Heat oil and add the spice mixture and cook out for 2-3 mins, then add in the cubed eggplant and stir to coat mixture with spices. Add honey, salt, cider vinegar and garam marsala. Cook until the mixture is absorbed into the eggplant.

Let the mixture cool and then spoon into sterilised bottles.

Note: makes 4 medium sized bottles (500g)

Aubergine (eggplant), orange and coriander chutney

2 tbsp coriander seeds
1 tbsp cumin seeds
½ tsp black peppercorns
1kg aubergines, trimmed and cut into 1cm cubes
600g red onions, chopped
4 fresh green chillies, deseeded and chopped
4-6 plump garlic cloves, crushed
Finely grated zest and freshly squeezed juice of 2 large oranges
600ml cider vinegar
400g demerara sugar
1 tbsp salt



Method

Put the spices in a grinder and whiz together until coarsely ground. Alternatively use a mortar and pestle. Put the ground spices and remaining ingredients in a pan and cook over low heat, stirring occasionally, to dissolve sugar.

Once the sugar has dissolved, increase the heat and bring the mixture to the boil. Simmer for 1 hour, stirring occasionally, until the chutney is very thick. Keep an eye on the mixture as it cooks because it has the tendency to stick and burn.

When the mixture has reached the desired consistency - you should be able to make a clear channel with a wooden spoon across the bottom of the pan - pot the chutney into hot sterilised jars, cover with vinegar proof seals and label. Store in a cool, dark place.

Variation: You can vary the spices used here to suit your taste – fennel seeds work well, as does freshly grated root ginger.

Sambal terong

These ingredients are suggestions and can be changed to taste.

25g red chillies	20 g palm sugar (or gula merah)
50 g shallots	2 / 500 g long purple aubergine, halved or cut into small pieces around 3-4cms long.
4 / 20 g garlic cloves	½ cup cooking oil
10g tamarind pulp, diluted with 2 cups warm water	1 tsp salt

Method

Grind chillies, shallots, salt and garlic in a mortar and pestle to a coarse chilli paste. Heat half the cooking oil in a wok, stir-fry eggplant pieces for one minute over medium heat. Remove from wok

and drain on a paper towel. Heat the rest of the oil. Stir fry chili paste until fragrant, about 2 minutes, over medium heat.

Add tamarind mixture and palm sugar. Let boil, for a couple of minutes. Toss in eggplants. Mix well and cook for another minute.

Endive - Cichorium endivia

Endive grows well in Cairns in the cooler winter months. It is a member of the chicory family and has a mild bitter flavour. The newer leaves are less bitter than the older ones. Unlike lettuce, it is slow to bolt (go to seed) so you can keep picking leaves for a long period.



When and where to plant

Plant endive in full sun from May to August.

Nutrition and how to eat

Endive is exceptionally high in potassium, fibre and folate, and contains vitamin A and vitamin K. It can be eaten raw in salads, but if you're not keen on the bitter taste, it can be lightly steamed to mellow the bitter taste. Adding a squeeze of fresh lemon can take away some of the bitterness.

Steamed curly endive

Wash the endive and separate the leaves. Place in a steamer for 2-3 minutes and remove to a bowl. Dress with olive oil, a good squeeze of lemon, salt and pepper.

Tabouli with endive

Big bunch of parsley	2 tbsp bulgar wheat
Handful of young endive leaves, finely chopped	Lemon juice
2 ripe tomatoes	Salt and pepper

Method

Put bulgar wheat in a bowl and add boiling water, leave to stand for 10 minutes and drain. Chop tomatoes finely and add to drained bulgar with all their juices. Add a good squeeze of lemon juice, salt and pepper. Finely chop the parsley and endive and stir into the bowl. Add more lemon, salt and pepper to taste.

Fragrant pandan - Pandanus amaryllifolius

When and where to plant:

Pandanus is a perennial growing to 1 metre. Shoots can be cut back to contain it. It will grow in sun to part shade.

How to eat and nutrition

The fragrant pandan leaves are used to flavour and colour southeast Asian deserts such as sago with coconut cream. Leaves can be added to rice when it is cooking, giving it a distinct flavor.



Chicken curry with pandanus

Marinate 1kg of chicken pieces for at least an hour in:

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| 8 tbsp fish sauce | 1 tbsp sugar |
| 1 tbsp finely grated garlic | 8 tbsp coconut cream |
| 1 tbsp finely grated turmeric | 1 tbsp oyster sauce |
| 2 tbsp lime juice | Chillies (optional) |

After marinating, wrap each chicken piece in one pandanus leaf and fry in coconut oil. Or put wrapped pieces of chicken on skewers and grill.

Guada Bean - Trichosanthus cucumerina

Guada beans are not a bean, but a gourd, and come in different shapes and colours (pale green, dark green and stripy), but are usually long and thin and mostly straight, with some



varieties curling at the end resembling a piglet's tail. They are in the same family as cucumber, zucchini and pumpkin. They grow easily in Cairns and fruit prolifically.

Other names: snake gourd, serpent gourd, PNG bean

When and where to plant

Plant seeds directly in soil or in seed tray when the temperature won't fall below 20C. They need support, such as a fence or trellis, as the fruit hangs and can grow to 70cm long. Plant this annual in a sunny position and water regularly. Make sure it doesn't get waterlogged as it will rot.

If you plant around September, you should be harvesting gourds in November right through the wet season.

How to eat and nutrition

Guada bean is a staple vegetable in many Asian countries, and is used in cooking, where its mild, cucumber-like flavour goes well in dishes such as soups, curries and stir-fries or as tempura. It is usually picked when it is immature, firm and crunchy with white pulp without seeds or with soft seeds that you can eat. In Africa, the mature fruit's red pulp is used as a substitute for tomato, and it is referred to as 'snake tomato'. Don't eat the seeds of mature fruit.

Guada bean is rich in fibre, zinc, magnesium, vitamin C, vitamin A and vitamin B6, and is packed with antioxidants and anti-inflammatories.

Guada bean kootu (southern Indian Curry)

1 medium snake gourd	<i>For tempering</i>
½ cup red lentils	2 tsp coconut oil
½ tsp turmeric powder (or 1 tbsp fresh grated turmeric)	1 tsp black mustard seeds
2 cups water	3 dried chillies
Salt to taste	Sprig curry leaves
	½ tsp asafoetida (optional)
<i>Paste</i>	
2 tsp coconut oil (or any vegetable oil)	
3 tbsp black gram dahl (or any dahl / lentils)	
3-4 red chillies	
3-4 tsp whole cumin seeds	
1 tsp raw rice	
½ fresh coconut grated (or ½ cup shredded coconut soaked in water and drained)	

Method

To make the paste: heat 2 teaspoons of oil in a small frying pan and add the black gram dahl and chillies. Cook for a few minutes until dahl changes colour but doesn't burn. Turn off heat and add cumin seed, rice and asafoetida, let cool a bit. Put in blender with the coconut and blend to a smooth paste adding a little water if needed.

Cook the red lentils in a pan with enough water to cook, you don't want too much extra water.

Chop the snake gourd in half and then bite size bits. Remove seeds if they are tough, otherwise you can eat them. Put in a pan with turmeric and some salt, add some water, enough to cook. Cover and cook until tender.

Add lentils and paste to the snake gourd and cook to combine with the lid off. Add more water if needed. You can make it like a soup, or a thicker curry.

For tempering, heat 2 teaspoons of oil in a small frying pan. When hot add the ingredients for tempering, when the mustard seeds splutter, take off the heat and add to the pot. Serve with rice or as a soup.

Guada bean pasta sauce

- 1 onion finely, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 small guada bean
- 3-4 fresh tomatoes, chopped (or tinned)
- 2 tbsp fresh herbs
- 1 chilli, chopped (optional)
- 1 tbsp capers (optional)



Method

Cut guada bean in half and use a teaspoon to scrape out the seeds and pith from the centre. Leave skin on and slice the into 5mm pieces (they will be semi circles).

Heat olive oil and fry onion until soft, add garlic and guada bean and continue to fry for a few minutes. Add tomatoes and put a lid on.

Turn heat to low and simmer until guada bean is cooked to desired texture (they don't go squishy like zucchini). Add chopped herbs, chilli and capers if using and cook for a couple of minutes. Serve with pasta and parmesan.

Jaboticaba - *Plinia cauliflora*

Jaboticaba originates in Brazil and grows well in the tropics. The species name *cauliflora* means 'flowers on the trunk'. The dark purple round fruit are produced on the trunk of the tree.

Nutrition and how to eat

Jaboticaba fruit are high in antioxidants, have potent anti-inflammatory properties, are high in calcium, phosphorous, iron and vitamin C and are great for the liver. Eat raw or juiced for max benefits!



Jaboticaba Jam

Pick a quantity of fruit and wash well. Put it in a pan and bring to the boil slowly, stirring, so that it doesn't stick. It will release its own juices. Cook until skins and seeds have separated and then push through a sieve with a wooden spoon to get as much juice out as possible.

Measure the juice and add the same amount of sugar; 1 cup juice = 1 cup sugar. Bring to the boil and simmer until jam sets when a spoonful is put on a cold plate. Should be about 10 to 20 minutes. Pack into sterilised jars.

Kale - Brassica oleracea acephala

Kale grows well in the winter in Cairns. There are many varieties available with different shaped and coloured leaves. Kale is a member of the brassica family and is closely related to wild cabbage. It is one of the most nutrient dense foods you can eat, so it's worth getting a taste for. If you're not a kale lover, have you ever tried kale chips? They are delicious.



Where and when to plant

Plant seedlings from April to August in full sun.

Nutrition and how to eat

Kale is high in vitamins A, vitamin C, vitamin K and folate. It contains phosphorus, potassium, calcium and zinc as well as a lot of other goodies. You can eat it raw, finely chopped in salads, sautéed, steamed, added to dips or juices.

Kale chips

Bunch of kale

Spray olive oil

Salt

Method

Pre-heat oven to 200C fan forced. Wash kale well and dry. Cut out the hard stems and discard. Tear into bite-sized pieces. Spray a baking tray with oil, put the kale in and spray again. Bake the kale, turning halfway through, for 10 -12 minutes or until crisp. Season with salt and serve hot. Try seasoning with Chinese five spice, chilli or paprika.

Kale dip

This dip is surprisingly yummy and quite addictive, even for non-kale lovers.

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| 1 bunch kale – pick leaves and discard stems | ½ cup olive oil (or enough for desired texture) |
| 1 cup cashew nuts | ½ lime juiced |
| 1 clove garlic chopped | Salt and pepper to taste |

Method

Put the kale, nuts, garlic and half the oil in a blender and blend till smooth, adding more oil to get a firm dip consistency. Add lime juice, salt and pepper and pulse to mix. Taste and add more lime if desired. Serve with crackers. Keeps in the fridge for a week.

Lemon - *Citrus limon*

Lemon trees grow well in the tropics, however keep an eye out for fungal diseases on the trunk and branches and treat accordingly as they can kill the tree. Citrus will fruit in full sun and part shade, but will bear more fruit in full sun.

Lemon cordial

2kg sugar
30g citric acid
30g tartaric acid
1½ l squeezed lemon juice
Zest of 2 lemons
1 l water



Method

Boil water, dissolve sugar and then add acids. Dissolve and leave to cool. When cool, add the lemon juice and zest. Bottle in sanitised bottles and refrigerate after opening. Keeps for a few months - longer in the fridge.

Preserved Lemons

2kg Lemons
200g coarse rock salt or sea salt
Peppercorns, cinnamon, cinnamon stick, star anise (optional)

Method

Wash lemons and put in the freezer overnight. Thaw and cut into quarters from top to within 1cm of bottom. Sprinkle salt in the bottom of sterilised jars and inside the cut lemons and pack tightly into the jar, pushing down to release juices and air bubbles. Sprinkling more salt as you go. Add some whole spices (optional).

When packed, top up with more lemon juice so that the lemons are covered, and lastly, a bit more salt. Put lid on and leave in a dark place for at least a month. Refrigerate when opened. Lasts for years.



Quick pickled lemons

- 1 red chilli, deseeded and chopped
- 3 tbsp lemon juice
- 3 small - medium lemons, halved lengthways and sliced as thinly as possible
- 35g caster sugar
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 tsp sweet paprika
- ¼ tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp ground turmeric



Method

Use a mortar and pestle to smash together the chilli with 1 teaspoon of the lemon juice to a rough paste. Transfer to a bowl with all the other ingredients. Use your hands to mix everything together well so all the flavours get massaged into the lemons. Cover and leave in a bowl overnight in the fridge. Transfer to a sterilised jar and keep in the fridge. It will keep for about 2 weeks.

Okinawa Spinach - *Gynura bicolor*

Okinawa spinach is a perennial plant native to China, Taiwan, Thailand and Myanmar. It is rich in protein, iron, potassium, calcium and vitamin A. It has many uses in traditional medicine.

When and where to plant

Easily grown from cuttings, plant directly into the ground in sun or part shade and keep moist. There are two varieties: green, and green with purple underside. Both taste similar.



Nutrition and how to eat

Used as a spinach, it is a useful plant to have in your garden as it produces spinach all year round. It is not mucilaginous, so is more similar to spinach or silver beet than some tropical spinach plants.

Okinawa spinach parcels

4 cups plain flour	½ cup grated parmesan
5 tbsp olive oil	1 chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
7 tbsp warm milk	Bunch of parsley, finely chopped
Salt	1 spring onion, finely chopped
2 ½ tsp active yeast	Zest of ½ lemon
Add water to correct consistency for kneading	Some grated nutmeg
Large bunch Okinawa spinach leaves chopped	Salt and pepper to taste
3 tbsp ricotta	Butter or olive oil for frying

Method

Mix 5 tablespoons of the olive oil with the warm milk, yeast and a pinch of salt. Put the flour in a bowl, add the yeast mixture and enough warm water to mix into a dough. Knead until dough is smooth. Cover with a clean tea towel and let sit for 30 minutes.

While the dough is resting, mix the filling ingredients together and taste, adding more of anything to achieve desired taste.

Divide dough into small portions and roll out into tortilla like circles. Place a small amount of filling in the middle and fold over to make a half moon. Press down the edges firmly.

Melt butter in a fry pan and fry the half-moons until golden on both sides.

Best served hot.

Okra - *Abelmoschus esculentus*

Other names: okro, gumbo, ladies fingers

When and where to plant

Plant in a sunny position November to March. Okra grows well in the wet season; can grow to 2m and may require staking. Pick every 2-3 days when the okra are small because they get tough and fibrous quickly.

How to eat and nutrition

Cook in curries, stews, soups and stir fries. They have a slight, slimy texture which can be an acquired taste. To reduce this, don't expose the seed cavity before cooking, just pare off the stem into a pyramid at the top so as not to expose the seeds. This is a bit fiddly but greatly reduces the mucilage when cooked.

Okra is very nutritious, a good source of folate, antioxidants, vitamin A, vitamin C and vitamin K.



Okra and potato curry

500g new potatoes, halved or quartered if large	1 tsp fennel seeds
200g okra trimmed	1½ tsp ground coriander
2 tbsp vegetable oil	½ tsp ground turmeric
1 large onion, finely chopped	1 green chilli finely chopped
5cm ginger, finely grated	2 tbsp tomato paste
2 cloves garlic, finely grated	500ml vegetable stock
1 tsp nigella seeds	Squeeze lemon juice
	Handful fresh coriander leaves

Method

Put the potatoes in a pan of salted boiling water and cook for 7 minutes, then drain and set aside. Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a frying pan over a medium heat and fry okra for 5-7 minutes until starting to colour. Put on kitchen paper and set aside.

Heat the remaining oil in a large pan and fry the onion for 5-7 minutes until starting to soften. Add the ginger and garlic and fry for 3 minutes. Add the nigella and fennel seeds, ground coriander and turmeric, then cook, stirring for 2-3 minutes. If it starts to stick add a splash of water.

Add the chilli and tomato paste, then add the okra and potatoes. Add the stock and simmer for 15 minutes. Season and add a squeeze of lemon and scatter over the fresh coriander leaves.

Serve with rice or naan bread, yoghurt and lemon wedges.

Stir fried okra and tomato

300g okra
2 tbsp olive oil
4 cloves garlic, sliced
20g chopped preserved lemon
3 tomatoes, cut into wedges
1 tbsp chopped parsley
1 tbsp chopped coriander
1 tbsp lemon juice
Salt and pepper

Method

Trim the okra by removing the stems just above the pod with a sharp knife, but not exposing the seeds.

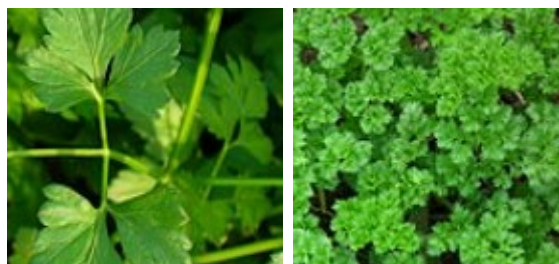
Heat a heavy-based fry pan till very hot, then put in the okra and dry cook for a few minutes shaking the pan occasionally until it has dark blisters. Add olive oil, garlic and preserved lemon to the pan and stir fry for 2 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium and add tomatoes, 2 tablespoons water, chopped herbs, lemon juice, ½ teaspoon salt and black pepper. Stir gently and cook for 3 minutes so tomatoes don't break up but warm through. Serve with rice.



Parsley - Petroselinum crispum

Where and when to plant:

Parsley grows best in the dry season, although can be kept through the following wet season if it survives. Plant seeds direct, or seedlings in a sunny position from May to September for best results.



Nutrition and how to eat

Parsley is rich in vitamins C, vitamin A, vitamin K and antioxidants. It is also an excellent source of folate, potassium, calcium and magnesium. One teaspoon of chopped parsley gives you 70% of the recommended daily intake of vitamin K.

Tabouli

Big bunch parsley
2 ripe tomatoes
2 tbps bulgar wheat

Lemon juice
Salt and pepper

Method

Put bulgar wheat in a bowl and add boiling water, leave to stand for 10 minutes and drain. Chop tomatoes finely and add to drained bulgar with all their juices. Add a good squeeze of lemon juice, salt and pepper. Finely chop loads of parsley and stir into bowl. Add more lemon, salt and pepper to taste.



Paw paw - Carica papaya

Paw paw originates from Central America. They grow easily and quickly in Cairns and can be grown from seed, usually fruiting within 1 year. They can live 5-6 years, but often the fruit gets smaller as they get older.



Where and when to plant

You can plant seed at any time of year. Choose a ripe fruit you like the taste of and plant the seeds a few in a hole in a sunny position. When they come up, select the strongest three seedlings and cut others off with secateurs (so as not to disturb the roots of the good ones). When they grow a bit more, select the strongest plant and cut the others off.

Green paw paw salad

2 cups finely grated green paw paw
Handful green beans
2 tbsp crushed roasted peanuts
1 clove garlic
2 shallots or 4 spring onions

2 fresh chillies or to taste
1 tbsp fish sauce
1 tbsp palm sugar
Lime juice to taste

Method

Peel the green paw paw and scrape out the seeds. Shred the flesh into long fine strands.

Cut the beans into 2.5cm lengths. Use a mortar and pestle to pound the garlic, shallots and chillies to a paste.

Add the fish sauce and palm sugar, pound to mix, then add beans and pound softly so they don't lose their shape. Add the paw paw shreds and pound softly to mix flavour through. Turn into a bowl and add lime juice to taste and crushed peanuts.



Pomelo - *Citrus maxima*

When and where to plant

Plant in a sunny position. Can be kept pruned to 3 meters and produces well. Usually fruits 2-3 years after planting in the ground. It's a heavy cropping tree.

How to eat and nutrition

Peel off the thick skin and remove the pith. Eat the flesh inside the segments and discard the tough skin around the segments. Delicious eaten as a fruit or sprinkled in salads. As with all citrus fruits, pomelo is a good source of vitamin C.



Rosella - *Hibiscus sabdariffa*

Other names: edible hibiscus, Queensland jam plant

When and where to plant

Plant rosella seeds directly in the garden or in seed trays December-February. Plant in a sunny spot with enough space. Rosella plants can grow to 1.5m tall and 1m wide.

How to eat and nutrition

The red edible calyx of the rosella fruit is high in vitamin C. Peel the red calyx away from the green seed and eat raw, it has a tart/sweet flavour. It is often made into Jam, cordial and herbal tea. The leaves can be cooked and have a tangy flavour, similar to sorrel.

Rosella Chutney

- 500g rosella petals
- 500g cooking apples
- 500g onions
- 2 large chillies (finely chopped)
- 2 ½ cups vinegar
- ½ cup Worcestershire sauce
- Handful raisins
- 1 tsp pepper
- 1 tbsp salt
- 1 dessert spoon allspice
- 500m sugar

Place all ingredients in a pan and boil for 1 hour, stirring constantly. Add 500gm sugar and boil for another 10 minutes.



Rosella Cordial

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 600g-1kg of fresh rosellas (seed pod and calyx) | 3 lemons |
| sugar – 1 cup sugar to 1 cup liquid | 2 tsp of citric acid |

Method

Wash the rosellas well, juice and strain the lemons. Place the rosellas into a large saucepan until it is ⅔ full and fill with water until the fruit are covered. Bring to the boil and then allow to simmer until the calyx's bright red colouring has faded.

Strain the resulting liquid through a sieve, throw the used fruit into the compost and measure the amount of liquid. Pour the liquid back into the saucepan, add the sugar at the ratio 1 cup sugar to 1 cup liquid and allow to simmer, stirring the sugar in until it is dissolved. Once dissolved bring to the boil for 1 minute.

Take the syrup off the heat, stir in the lemon juice and citric acid. Bring back to the boil for 30 seconds while stirring and pour into sterilised, dry bottles.

Snake beans - *Vigna unguiculata*

Snake beans are a fast-growing annual bean that bear prolifically throughout the year. They bear white, blue to violet flowers which are also edible and can be used in salads. They flower 6-10 weeks after seedlings appear. The pods vary in length from 30-80 cm. Pick the beans when they are young and firm. Older pods can be harvested and then used as dried beans.

Other names: yard long bean

When and where to plant

There are many varieties of snake bean that vary in colour and texture. There are climbing varieties which require a sturdy trellis, and dwarf varieties which don't. The climbing varieties are more prolific for longer periods. Snake beans can be grown all year round in the tropics, but if you plant November to December, directly in the ground, you will get huge amounts of beans throughout the wet season. Grow in full sun.



How to eat and nutrition

Snake beans can be eaten cooked or raw, in stir-fries, curries, soups or stews. They are a good source of fiber and folate.

Blistered snake beans and kang kong spinach

- 1 handful snake beans, chopped
- 1 bunch kang kong spinach, chopped with stems
- 2 cloves garlic, sliced
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp soy sauce (or to taste)
- Juice of half a lemon



Method

Heat oil in large frying pan. When hot, add snake beans and cook on a high heat for a few minutes until the beans blister a bit. Reduce heat to medium and add garlic, stir fry for 1 minute and add soy sauce and kang kong. Cook for 2 minutes until kang kong wilts. Serve on rice.

You can mix things up depending on what you have in the garden.

Tomato - *Solanum lycopersicum*

Spicy tomato chutney

- 2 tbsp oil (to fry spices)
- 30-40 milder chillies, finely chopped; or 3-6 birds eyes
- 20 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 250g fresh ginger, finely grated or chopped
- 5kg tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 6 tbsp ground cumin
- 2 tbsp turmeric
- 2 tbsp black mustard seeds
- 4 cups cider or brown vinegar
- 3 tbsp salt
- 3-5 onions, chopped
- 3 cups sugar
- 2 large green apples (optional)

Method

Heat the oil and fry the spices, garlic, ginger and chillies in a large, heavy-based saucepan (not aluminium) until lightly cooked. Add the rest of the ingredients and simmer slowly for around 2 hours, stirring regularly, until the desired consistency is reached. The saucepan should not be more than $\frac{2}{3}$ full.

Apples are optional. They can be added at the same time as the tomatoes, first peel and finely chop.

Stir often. The chutney will start to stick when it is nearly ready. Heat clean jars, standing upright in a baking tray, in a slow oven, without lids, until very hot. Take chutney off the stove and bottle and seal jars immediately. Jars with plastic or plastic-lined lids are best for chutney because the vinegar corrodes metal.



Wing Beans - *Psophocarpus tetragonolobus*

Wing beans are a vigorous climbing bean that require a strong support to grow on. They are disease resistant and fruit prolifically for long periods.

Other names: asparagus bean, four-cornered bean

When and where to plant

Wing beans can be grown all year round in the tropics in full sun. Provide a strong support for them to climb on.



How to eat and nutrition

All parts of the plant are edible; the pods are used like beans, the leaves like spinach, the flowers in salads and the tubers can also be cooked. The pods are rich in protein and contain vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and iron.

Sri Lankan Wing Bean Curry

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 250gm wing beans (or snake beans, green beans) | ½ tsp black mustard seed |
| 1 small onion | ½ tsp fenugreek seed |
| 1 tbsp curry powder (Sri Lankan if you can find it) | 1 tsp salt |
| 1 tsp turmeric | 25ml coconut oil (or olive oil) |
| 1 tsp chilli powder (or use fresh chilli chopped) | 2 cloves garlic chopped |
| | 200 ml coconut milk |

Method

Cut beans into bite size. Put in bowl and add curry powder, turmeric, chilli and salt and mix.

Heat coconut oil in a saucepan and fry onion, garlic. Mustard and fenugreek seeds till onions are soft. Add the beans and fry for 10 minutes, stirring to stop them sticking. Add coconut milk and cook for 3 minutes. Serve with rice.

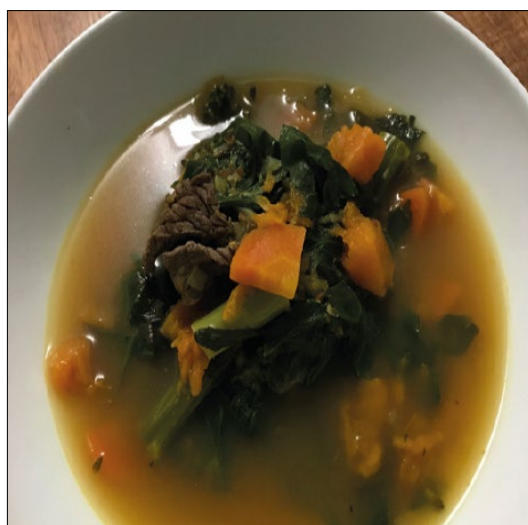


Vegetables mixed

Vegie-based soup

This soup recipe is a good base that can be frozen and reheated for a quick and easy meal. Add whatever else you wish, for example, protein or extra greens / herbs from the vegie patch. Remember this is just a base and is very flexible, make to suit your taste.

- 5 garlic cloves, sliced or crushed
- 2.5cm ginger, grated
- Turmeric (fresh or 1 tsp powder)
- 2 onions, diced
- 1 sweet potato, diced
- 2 carrots, diced
- 3 celery stalks, diced
- 2 sprigs of thyme
- ½ cup parsley
- 8 cups of water (home-made stock or a good store-bought protein broth for enhanced flavour).



Method

In a large stock pot, cook your spices in a little olive oil, add onion and cook until clear, followed by garlic, ginger and turmeric. Add sweet potato, carrot and celery and cook for a couple of minutes. Add water (or stock), thyme and parsley.

You can add anything you wish. Pictured with finely sliced beef, variety of greens from the garden, spring onions and a little salt and pepper.

Vegetable Curry

1 tbsp olive oil	1 cup fresh coriander leaves, chopped
1 large onion	1/2 cauliflower, cut into florets
2 cloves garlic, crushed	1/2 broccoli, cut into florets
1 tsp fresh ginger, grated	3 baby eggplants
1 tbsp red curry paste	4 tomatoes, diced
2 medium zucchinis, sliced	125g button mushrooms, halved
6 baby yellow squash, chopped	4 tbsp sour cream
125g green string beans, trimmed and cut into 10cm lengths	

Method

Heat oil in large saucepan. Add onion, garlic, ginger and curry paste and stir-fry 3 minutes or until onion has softened. Add cauliflower, broccoli, eggplant, mushrooms, zucchini and yellow squash. Stir-fry 10 minutes or till vegetables are browned and cooked thru.

Combine tomatoes and mushrooms with extra olive oil and stir-fry 5 minutes. Add sour cream, vegetables and coriander. Heat through and serve.

Zucchini - Cucurbita pepo

Where and when to plant

Zucchini grow in the dry season in Cairns. Their leaves are prone to powdery mildew. Try spraying with milk diluted with water at the first signs of powdery mildew to control it. Plant seeds direct or seedlings in full sun, into compost rich mounds June-September.

How to eat and nutrition

Zucchini can be eaten raw or cooked, in salads, soups, curries, stews, stir-fries or tempura.



Zucchini Pickle

Great with crackers and cheese

1kg zucchini	1 tbsp salt
2 onions	2 tsp mustard seeds
2 cups white sugar	1 tsp turmeric
1 cup white vinegar	1 tsp chilli powder / or/ red Thai chillies to taste

Method

Place the vinegar, salt, sugar, mustard seeds, turmeric and chilli into a large saucepan that has a tight-fitting lid. Bring to a boil and simmer rapidly for 5 minutes.

Finely slice the zucchini and onions. Turn the heat off under the saucepan and place the vegetables into the liquid. Put the lid back on and leave to steep for at least 2 hours.

Stir the vegetables after the first hour. After 2 hours, the vegetables will have softened and reduced in volume. Turn the heat back on and bring everything back to boil and simmer for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Bottle immediately into hot large jars or bottles. Allow to stand in a cool dark place for at least a week for the flavours to develop and refrigerate after opening.

Has a refrigerated life of at least two years.

Planting guide

	January	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual	Perennial
Aibika – from cutting	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√
Amaranth				√	√	√	√	√					√	
Artichoke globe				√	√	√	√							√
Asian greens				√	√	√	√	√					√	
Basil	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Beans (French & European)				√	√	√	√						√	
Beans snake	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Beetroot				√	√	√							√	
Bitter Melon													√	
Boc Choy				√	√	√	√	√					√	
Brazilian spinach – from cutting	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√
Broccoli				√	√	√	√						√	
Cabbage				√	√	√	√	√					√	
Cape gooseberry			√	√	√	√	√	√					√	
Capsicum				√	√	√	√						√	
Carrots				√	√	√							√	
Cassava - cutting				√	√	√							√	
Celery				√	√	√	√						√	
Ceylon spinach													√	
Chilli				√	√	√	√							√
Chinese cabbage - wong bok				√	√	√	√	√					√	
Chives				√	√	√	√							√
Choko				√	√	√	√							√
Collards				√	√	√	√	√	√				√	
Coriander				√	√	√	√						√	
Cowpeas – black eye beans							√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Cucumber				√	√	√	√	√					√	
Daikon				√	√	√	√						√	
Dill					√	√	√						√	
Eggplant				√	√	√	√	√	√	√				√
Endive				√	√	√	√						√	
Fennel bulb				√	√	√	√						√	
Fennel herb				√	√	√	√						√	
Ginger			√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√			√
Kale				√	√	√	√						√	
Kohlrabi				√	√	√	√	√					√	
Leeks				√	√	√							√	
Lettuce				√	√								√	
Lemon balm						√	√							√
Luffa				√	√	√	√						√	
Mint				√	√	√	√							√
Mizuna				√	√	√	√						√	
Mustard greens	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	

Okra				√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Oregano					√	√	√	√							√
Onion				√	√	√	√							√	
Pak Choy				√	√	√	√	√						√	
Parsley				√	√	√	√							√	
Peas				√	√									√	
Pumpkin				√	√	√	√							√	
Radish				√	√	√	√							√	
Rockmelon				√	√	√	√							√	
Rosemary					√	√								√	
Sage					√	√	√								√
Shallots			√	√	√	√								√	
Silverbeet				√	√	√	√							√	
Spring onions					√	√	√	√						√	
Squash				√	√	√	√	√						√	
Strawberry plants				√	√										√
Sunflower					√	√	√	√						√	
Sweet corn	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√		√	
Sweet potato	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
Taro									√	√				√	
Tarragon - cutting				√	√	√	√								√
Thyme						√	√	√							√
Tomatillo					√	√	√	√						√	
Tomato					√	√	√	√	√					√	
Tumeric				√	√	√	√	√	√						√
Turnip				√	√	√								√	
Watermelon				√	√	√	√							√	
Wing Bean			√	√	√	√								√	
Yacon				√	√	√	√							√	
Yam						√	√	√						√	
Zucchini					√	√	√	√	√					√	