

Did You Know?



Sorrel *Rumex acetosa*, *R. scutatus*

- *Rumex acetosa*, commonly referred to as garden or common sorrel, has a tart, citrus flavor. *Rumex scutatus*, or French sorrel is more mild in lemon flavor and smaller arrow shaped leaves.
- In early summer, sorrel produces flower spikes with tiny green flower clusters that turn a rusty red as they age.
- The common sorrel was a popular English herb throughout Europe. French sorrel increased in popularity in the 16th century until it replaced the common sorrel. Both fell out of favor over time.
- Before lemons became popular, sorrel was used in the Middle Ages to add some sour flavor to foods.
- Young leaves in early spring provide the best flavor in salads. Older leaves can be used in stews, soups and sauces. The flavor becomes more bitter as the season progresses. Sorrel is also used in dishes with goat cheese, eggs and poultry.
- Sorrel is high in vitamin C and was valued for the prevention of scurvy before citrus fruit was readily available. It also is high in vitamins A and B9, and minerals such as potassium, magnesium, sodium, iron and calcium.
- All types of sorrel have oxalic acid, which gives the leaves their tangy flavor. Those with kidney stones, arthritis or gout are generally warned to consume this herb sparingly.
- Sorrel has had medicinal uses throughout the ages, including to treat scorpion bites, aid the heart, kill worms and soothe skin lesions.
- More recent research has identified flavonoids, antioxidants, and anthocyanins in sorrel which make it useful in treating or preventing a variety of conditions including cancer, hypertension, heart disease and diabetes. The tannins in sorrel are said to reduce mucus production and are helpful in combatting inflamed sinuses. It is also known as a diuretic.
- According to lore, garden sorrel sap can be used to remove laundry stains.
- Sorrel is often available in farmer's markets in early spring. It is also easily grown in home gardens from seed and is hardy to Zone 3.

It is the policy of The Herb Society of America, Inc. not to advise or recommend herbs for medicinal or health use. This information is intended for educational purposes only and should not be considered as a recommendation or an endorsement of any particular medical or health treatment. Please consult a health care provider before pursuing any herbal treatments.