

PURSLANE



PURSLANE (botanical name *Portulaca oleracea*)

is a low growing succulent plant with a lemony flavor and crunchy texture when raw. Both the stems and leaves are edible. Purslane is one of the only vegetables to contain omega-3 fatty acids, which have been linked to lowered cholesterol levels and reduced incidence of some cancers. It can be found growing wild in many home gardens and farms and is commonly known as “pigweed.” Purslane grows very well throughout the year in many climates including the Northeast. Look for purslane throughout the spring and summer months.



STORAGE

- ◆ Purslane will keep for **about a week** unwashed, wrapped in a damp paper towel (change the towel every other day or so), or loosely packed in a plastic container in the refrigerator drawer.
- ◆ **To freeze**, wash leaves and stems, and steam until just wilted. Cool and pack in freezer bags or plastic containers.

PREPARATION

- ◆ Purslane is often sandy because it grows low to the ground. Be sure to wash well in plenty of cool water (add a little salt to draw the dirt particles away from the vegetable).
- ◆ Tear raw purslane into clumps and **add to salads**. Milder greens and a light vinaigrette will offset the tartness of the purslane.
- ◆ Purslane can also be cooked. Cooked purslane has a gummy texture and can be used to thicken soups and stews. **Try substituting purslane for spinach, okra, or other cooking greens in your favorite recipe.**
- ◆ In Mexico a popular dish combines purslane, tomatillos, potatoes, fresh chilies, and pork.

Nutritional Information

Purslane is a good source of vitamins C and A. Vitamin C is important in immune response, wound healing, and allergic reactions. Vitamin C also helps with iron absorption. Vitamin A is important in vision, growth and development, skin health, immune function and reproduction. The leaves are also a source of omega-3 fatty acids.

Purslane Recipes

Purslane, Tomato and Cucumber Salad

- 1/4 pound purslane
- 1 bunch scallions, trimmed and sliced
- 1 cup peeled and cubed ripe tomatoes
- 1 cup peeled, seeded and cubed cucumbers
- 2 cloves garlic, pressed or minced
- 3 Tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Fresh mint or dill springs for garnish



Wash the purslane well and remove any thick stems. In a bowl, combine purslane, scallions, tomatoes, cucumbers, lemon juice, garlic, olive oil, salt and pepper in a bowl. Mix well and garnish with mint or dill. Serve immediately.

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Zucchini and Purslane Soup

- 1 cup purslane leaves, chopped
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
- 3 cups water
- 1 cup diced zucchini or yellow summer squash
- 1 carrot, diced
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons parsley, chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste



In a medium pot, boil some salted water and blanch the purslane leaves by dropping them into the water for 10 seconds (or until they wilt). Drain them in a colander. In a medium size saucepan, over medium flame, heat oil. Add onion and garlic sauté until onion turns clear, about 3 minutes. Add 3 cups of water, purslane, zucchini, carrot, cumin, parsley, salt and pepper. Simmer on low heat for about 40 minutes or until the zucchini breaks down and serve.

Recipe adapted from *Gardener* magazine, July/August 2000.

Summer Harvest Salad

Vinaigrette:

- 2 Tablespoons sherry vinegar
- 4 Tablespoons grapeseed oil (or substitute any other mildly flavored oil such as walnut or olive oil)
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Salad:

- 5 cups mixed salad greens
- 1 cup green or golden purslane leaves
- Any other seasonal veggies (carrots, peppers, cucumber, tomatoes, etc.), washed and cut into pieces



For the vinaigrette, in a small bowl, whisk together vinegar, salt and pepper then slowly whisk in the oils. Wash and dry the salad greens and tear into bite-sized pieces. Strip the leaves from the purslane and wash and dry them. Toss the greens with the purslane, any other vegetables and the vinaigrette.

Recipe adapted from *Gardener* magazine, July/August 2000.