

Sorrel

Rumex acetosa
Family: Polygonaceae

Description

Sorrel is mix of herb and vegetable. It has bright green, smooth, but slightly floppy leaves of elongated, triangular shape with lobes that reach back from the end of a long, succulent leafstalk on either side of the mid rib, similar to an arrow but with a blunt point. Along a 50-90cm tall red/green stalk are loose bunches of small red to pink flowers.

Growing Tips

It grows from a taproot and likes a sunny position or partial shade with moderately rich well-drained soil. Any leaves that are eaten by snails should be discarded. For best results do not pick young shoots from the heart of the plant and plant 30cm apart.

Parts Used

Leaves

Uses

Sorrel is used only for culinary purposes and its strong, sour flavour is due to oxalic acid which is poisonous in large quantities. Sorrel should therefore be used in moderation, and not too often.

Nevertheless it has a firm place in many Eastern and central European countries as the main ingredient in soups (blanched and pureed), in salads and sandwiches, or to add flavour to mashed potatoes. People suffering from arthritis should avoid Sorrel.

Origin & History

Sorrel is a cultivar of sour dock and has been a weed throughout Europe and Asia. The word is derived from an old German term for 'sour'. The indigenous Arctic peoples of Europe used it to preserve and flavour reindeer milk.

