

TALINUM



Scientific Name: *Talinum triangulare* (Jacq.) Willd.

Common Name: Waterleaf

Local Names: Galaghati (Subanon)

Biala (Marinduque)

Talinum (Tagalog, Ilokano)

BOTANICAL DESCRIPTION

Talinum is an erect perennial herb with swollen roots and succulent stems, 30-100 cm tall. The branches have two lateral basal buds. The leaves are spirally arranged to nearly opposite, often crowded at the top of the stem. The waterleaf is fast growing and once established, easily reseeds itself. Talinum flowers early year-round, and is mainly self-pollinating. The flowers are pink in color and open in the morning.

ADAPTABILITY AND AVAILABILITY

Talinum is adaptable throughout the country. It is best suited in a wet tropical environment with partial shade.

USES/IMPORTANCE

The leaves and shoots are usually consumed as cooked (boiled or steamed) vegetable. They are rather soft and watery and should not be cooked for long time. Talinum is also added raw to salads in the Sudanese cuisine in West Java. It is a good alternative for purslane (*Portulaca oleracea* L.).

In Southeast Asia, waterleaf is sometimes planted as an ornamental pot plant or an edging plant in gardens. In South America, It has some medicinal applications. The crushed plant is applied as a poultice on contusion, inflammation and tumor. Decoctions are used for painful eyes and to aid recovery from blows and falls.

NUTRIENT VALUE

A one hundred grams edible portion of waterleaf contain water (90-92 g), protein (1.9-2.4 g), fat (0.4-0.5), carbohydrates (3.7-4.0 g), fiber (0.6-1.1 g), ash (2.4 g), Ca (90-

135 mg), Fe (4.8-5.0 mg), beta carotene (3 mg), vitamin B₁ (0.08 mg), vitamin B₂ (0.18 mg), niacin (0.30 mg), and vitamin C (31 mg). The energy value is 105 kJ/100 g. Talinum has a rather high oxalate content, thus inhibiting calcium and iodine absorption.

PROPAGATION

Waterleaf is usually propagated by seed, However, small seed are difficult to collect because fruits readily dehisce. It can also be propagated vegetatively. Cuttings, 15-20 cm long, are taken from mature stems.

CULTURAL PRACTICES

Seeds are planted by broadcasting, direct seeding or sowing in a seedbox and then, transplanting. The delicate seedlings must be shaded and mulched. Plant densities vary at 10-25 plants/m² depending on the harvesting method and crop duration.

PEST AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT

There are no known serious diseases or pests of talinum.

HARVESTING

Harvesting starts about 6-8 weeks after sowing either by uprooting or by cutting the young tops. This may be done 15-20 times a year at two-weeks intervals. However, it is usually advisable to renew the planting after about six months. Yields have been estimated at 10 kg/m² per year. Seed yields are low and amount to 100-300 kg/ha. Seed production is untopped plants reaches a peak about 10 weeks after sowing.

PROSPECTS/OPPURTUNITIES

Talinum, with its slimy texture, is a popular vegetable in many African countries. It spreads easily and is becoming an agricultural weed. Agronomic research and breeding work should be done on this vegetable.

