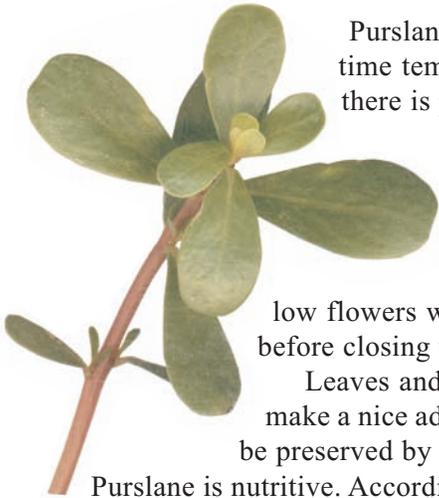


Purslane

(*Portulaca oleracea*)

Portulacaceae



Purslane is a summer green, one that doesn't emerge until later in the spring after the day-time temperatures climb into the 80s. Look for it in garden beds and edges of lawns where there is plenty of sunlight.

Purslane is easy to identify. It has thick, succulent leaves and reddish-purple stems that sprawl across the ground and forms clumps. Purslane is drought tolerant. It has adapted to growing in hot, sunny conditions by storing excess water in the leaves and stems.

Fleshy leaves are oval-shaped with rounded tips and smooth margins. Small, yellow flowers with five petals appear on bright, sunny mornings and are open for only a few hours before closing up. Following the flower is a seed capsule that releases numerous tiny black seeds.

Leaves and stems are edible with a mild, somewhat tart taste. Stems are tender and crispy and make a nice addition to salads or as a cooked green with potatoes or other vegetables. They can also be preserved by pickling or tincturing with vinegar.

Purslane is nutritive. According to Jim Duke (1997), it is the best leafy source of omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3's are essential fatty acids that can help prevent heart attacks by preventing blood clots that trigger it. The fresh greens also contain calcium and magnesium in a one-to-one ratio, which makes it most protective for the heart. Purslane also is an excellent source of vitamins A, C, and E.

Reference

Duke, J. A. (1997). *The Green Pharmacy*. Rodale Press: Emmaus, PA.

Purslane Pickles

1 pint washed and rinsed purslane stems and leaves
3/4 cup water
3/4 cup apple cider vinegar
2 tablespoons field garlic vinegar
1 tablespoon organic cane sugar
2 teaspoons sea salt

Pack the purslane in a pint jar. In a saucepan, combine the water, vinegar, sea salt, and cane sugar. Bring to a boil. Pour the brine over the purslane, making sure to submerge all the purslane under the brine.

Seal the jar and place in the refrigerator for at least 3 days before eating.

Purslane-Tomato Salad

2 cups purslane leaves 2-3 tbsp. chives
3 Roma tomatoes salt to taste
1 cayenne pepper 2-3 tbsp. garlic vinegar

Finely chop all ingredients. Add salt and pour vinegar over vegetables. Sprinkle chives on top. Chill and serve.

Poisonous Look-Alike

There is a poisonous look-alike. Spotted spurge (*Euphorbia* spp.) is another sprawling plant that grows in similar conditions as purslane. It also has reddish stems but the leaves are much smaller and not as succulent. When the leaves and stems are broken, it exudes a white, milky sap that is toxic.



Spotted spurge
(*Euphorbia maculata*)