

# Know 10 Leafy Vegetables

## About Community in Bloom

Community in Bloom (CIB) is a programme that was launched by the National Parks Board (NParks) in 2005. It aims to nurture a gardening culture among Singaporeans by encouraging and facilitating community gardening efforts. It is also an opportunity to build community bonds and strengthen social resilience in our City in Nature.



Share your love for nature and animals at  
#NParksBuzz #AnimalBuzzSG

For more information, visit our website at [www.nparks.gov.sg/cib](http://www.nparks.gov.sg/cib) or email us at [CommunityInBloom@nparks.gov.sg](mailto:CommunityInBloom@nparks.gov.sg)

For more information on plants in Singapore, visit NParks Flora & Fauna Web at [www.nparks.gov.sg/florafauweb](http://www.nparks.gov.sg/florafauweb)

For more gardening resources and tips, visit [go.gov.sg/gardening-resources](http://go.gov.sg/gardening-resources)

To learn more about our City in Nature, scan the QR code or visit [www.nparks.gov.sg/about-us/city-in-nature](http://www.nparks.gov.sg/about-us/city-in-nature)



This brochure features 10 of the most commonly cultivated 'leafy vegetables' in Singapore. This term generally refers to the leaves or roots of food crops, such as Kailan, Kale, Lettuce and Sweet Potato.

There are numerous varieties of leafy vegetables that can be grown in Singapore. We hope that this brochure will encourage you to try growing these edibles on your own or in your community garden!

## Why Grow Leafy Vegetables?

Leafy vegetables can often be harvested in a short time period. From seed to harvest, the edibles in this brochure take only three weeks to three and a half months to grow!

Growing edibles as a community means you can reap the following benefits:

- Harvest food when it is fresh and as needed
- Meet people and make friends who have a similar passion for gardening
- Have fun and keep fit

## Differences Between Fruits and Vegetables

We often refer to the raw, plant-produced whole foods that we eat as fruits and vegetables, with savoury produce like edible leaves and roots commonly called 'vegetables', and sweet produce usually called 'fruit'. However, in botanical terms, a fruit is actually the mature ovary of a seed plant, usually developed from a flower. So foods like gourds, tomatoes, chillis and beans, which we might normally call vegetables, are technically fruit. Here are some general differences between fruits and vegetables:

### Presence of Seeds

Fruit – Yes

Vegetable - No

### Nutrition

#### Fruit

- Low in fat and calories
- High in fibre
- Often high in natural sugars

#### Vegetable

- Low in fat and calories
- High in fibre
- Starchy vegetables tend to be high in natural sugars

### Taste and Culinary Uses

#### Fruit

- Generally sweet, but sometimes tart or sour
- Often enjoyed as a dessert or snack

#### Vegetable

- Not sweet or very subtly sweet
- Commonly eaten as part of a prepared dish or main meal

# Caixin

**Scientific Name**  
*Brassica rapa*  
(*Parachinensis* Group)



**Plant Characteristics**  
Caixin is a herbaceous annual. It takes three to five days to germinate, and 30 to 40 days to be ready for harvest.

**Cultivation and Plant Care**  
This plant grows best in well-draining soil. It requires full sun and moderate watering. It can be propagated by seeds but the seeds should be dried for at least a week before sowing.

**Culinary Uses**  
The leaves are eaten raw, stir-fried, lightly boiled or steamed. The mild flavour of the crunchy stems and soft leaves make them a good match for many different foods.

# Ceylon Spinach

**Scientific Name**  
*Basella alba*



**Plant Characteristics**  
Ceylon Spinach is a creeper. It takes about seven days to germinate, and 42 to 56 days to be ready for harvest.

**Cultivation and Plant Care**  
This plant grows best in well-draining soil. It requires full sun and moderate watering. It can be propagated by seeds and stem cuttings, and requires a trellis to climb on.

**Culinary Uses**  
The tips of the leaves and stems are eaten raw or cooked. They have a pleasant mild flavour, and a sticky quality which also make them an excellent thickening agent in soups.

# Chinese Mustard

**Scientific Name**  
*Brassica juncea*



**Plant Characteristics**  
Chinese Mustard is a herbaceous annual. It takes three to five days to germinate, and about 40 days to be ready for harvest.

**Cultivation and Plant Care**  
This plant grows best in well-draining soil. It requires full sun and moderate watering. It can be propagated by seeds.

**Culinary Uses**  
The entire plant can be eaten, from its flower to its roots and seeds. The leaves are eaten raw in salads or cooked. Oil extracted from the seeds is used as mustard flavouring. The seeds are also used in curries and pickles.

# Chinese Spinach

**Scientific Name**  
*Amaranthus tricolor*



**Plant Characteristics**  
Also commonly known as Bayam, Chinese Spinach is grown throughout Southeast Asia. It is a herbaceous annual, and the bright red colour of its leaves is from antioxidants called betalains. It takes three to five days to germinate, and about 21 days to be ready for harvest.

**Cultivation and Plant Care**  
This plant grows best in well-draining soil. It requires full sun and moderate watering. It can be propagated by seeds or stem cuttings.

**Culinary Uses**  
The leaves are eaten raw in salads or steamed. Yellow and green dyes can be extracted from this plant.

# Kailan

**Scientific Name**  
*Brassica oleracea*  
(*Alboglabra* Group)



**Plant Characteristics**  
Kailan is grown throughout Southeast Asia. It is a herbaceous annual. It takes three to five days to germinate, and 21 to 55 days to be ready for harvest.

**Cultivation and Plant Care**  
This plant grows best in well-draining soil. It requires full sun and moderate watering. It can be propagated by seeds.

**Culinary Uses**  
Kailan and Broccoli are different varieties of the same species, and their flavours are very similar. However, most people find Kailan to be slightly more bitter. The leaves and stems are boiled, steamed or stir-fried.

# Kale

**Scientific Name**  
*Brassica oleracea*  
(*Acephala* Group)



**Plant Characteristics**  
Kale is a herbaceous annual. There are many varieties of Kale – the leaves can be curly or smooth, and come in a range of colours, including purple, blue-green and even white. Do note that some varieties are ornamental, with tough and indigestible leaves. This plant takes three to five days to germinate, and about 35 days to be ready for harvest.

**Cultivation and Plant Care**  
This plant grows best in well-draining soil. It requires full sun and moderate watering. It can be propagated by seeds.

**Culinary Uses**  
The leaves are eaten raw in salads, added to juices or baked into crisps.

# Kang Kong

**Scientific Name**  
*Ipomoea aquatica*



**Plant Characteristics**  
A member of the Morning Glory family, Kang Kong is a creeper. It is in the same genus as Sweet Potato. Kang Kong takes about three days to germinate, and about 21 days to be ready for harvest.

**Cultivation and Plant Care**  
This plant grows best in well-draining soil. It requires full sun and moderate watering. It can be propagated by seeds or stem cuttings.

**Culinary Uses**  
The leaves and stems are eaten raw, blanched or stir-fried.

# Lettuce

**Scientific Name**  
*Lactuca sativa*



**Plant Characteristics**  
Lettuce belongs to the same family as the Sunflower and Daisy, and its flowers actually look similar to those of Daisy. It is a herbaceous annual. Lettuce takes about four days to germinate, and about 56 days to be ready for harvest.

**Cultivation and Plant Care**  
This plant grows best in well-draining soil. It requires full sun and moderate watering. It can be propagated by seeds.

**Culinary Uses**  
The leaves are eaten raw in salads and sandwiches, boiled in soup or blanched.

# Sweet Potato

**Scientific Name**  
*Ipomoea batatas*



**Plant Characteristics**  
Sweet Potato is a creeper. It can have tubers in different colours, namely orange, white, yellow, red or purple. This plant takes six to 15 days to germinate, and about 120 days to be ready for harvest.

**Cultivation and Plant Care**  
Sweet Potato grows best in well-draining soil. It requires full sun and moderate watering. It can be propagated by seeds, tubers or stem cuttings. This plant competes poorly with weeds, so beds planted with Sweet Potato should be weeded regularly and fertilised periodically for a better harvest.

**Culinary Uses**  
The leaves are blanched, boiled in soup or stir-fried with chilli paste. The tubers can be boiled, made into flour, or made into cream for desserts.

# Xiao Bai Cai

**Scientific Name**  
*Brassica rapa*  
(*Chinensis* Group)



**Plant Characteristics**  
Also known as Bok Choy, Xiao Bai Cai is a herbaceous annual. There are two common varieties of this plant – one with green stems and another with white stems. It takes about three days to germinate, and 40 to 45 days to be ready for harvest.

**Cultivation and Plant Care**  
Xiao Bai Cai grows best in well-draining soil. It requires full sun and moderate watering. It can be propagated by seeds or stem cuttings.

**Culinary Uses**  
The green-stemmed variety has a milder flavour, more tender leaves and less juicy stems than the white-stemmed variety. The leaves are eaten boiled, blanched, or stir-fried.