

Amaranthus tricolor

[Synonyms : *Alternanthera tricolor*, *Amaranthus gangeticus*, *Amaranthus gangeticus* v. *melancholicus*, *Amaranthus mangostanus*, *Amaranthus melancholicus*, *Amaranthus oleraceus*, *Amaranthus polygamus*, *Amaranthus salicifolius*, *Amaranthus tricolor* subsp. *tricolor*, *Amaranthus tricolor* subsp. *tristis*, *Amaranthus tristis*]

JOSEPH'S COAT is an annual. Native to tropical Asia it has large plain coloured or a striped mixture of bronze, red, purplish, yellow, pink and white leaves.

It is also known as African spinach, *Amaranis* (Spanish), *Amarant* (Danish, Dutch, German), *Amarante comestible* (French), *Amarante de gange* (French), *Amarante du gange* (French), *Amarante tricolore* (French), *Amaranth*, *Amaranthe* (French), *Amaranth greens*, *Amaranth spinach*, *Amaranto* (Italian, Spanish), *Amaranto a tre colori* (Italian), *Amaranto tricolore* (Italian), *Amarantos* (Portuguese), *Amarantos-a-folhas* (Portuguese), *Amarant trekhtsvetnyi* (Russian), *Ansong* (Telugu), *Ariki sira* (Sanskrit), *Bathua* (Punjabi), *Bayam* (Indonesian, Malay), *Bredo-roxo* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Bredo-vermelho* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Bustan abruz* (Arabic), *Calaloo*, *Careless weed*, *Carurú* (Portuguese), *Carurú-vermelho* (Brazilian, Portuguese), *Cerikkirai* (Tamil), *Chaulaai* (Hindi), *Chauli* (Hindi), *Chavleri* (Hindi), *Chinese amaranth*, *Chinese spinach*, *Chinesischer Salat* (German), *Cirukirai* (Tamil), *Coloured-leaf amaranth*, *Copperleaf*, *Dền canh* (Vietnamese), *Dengo* (Bengali), *Dengua* (Bengali), *Dengua sag* (Bengali), *Dền tía* (Vietnamese), *Dreifarbige Fuchsschwanz* (German), *Dugg el amir* (Arabic), *Edible amaranth*, *Espinafre africano* (Portuguese), *Fountain plant*, *Ganges amaranth*, *Ganraikou* (Japanese), *Gemüseamarant* (German), *Hageitou* (Japanese), *Halon* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Hin tsoi* (Chinese), *Hiyu na* (Japanese), *Hou ting hua* (Chinese), *Kadife çiçeği* (Turkish), *Kayyatota kura* (Telugu), *Kirjorevonhäntä* (Finnish), *Konkarung sag* (Bengali), *Kulitis* (Tamil), *Lal bhagi* (Hindi), *Lalsag* (Hindi), *Marisha* (Sanskrit), *Moco de pavo* (Spanish), *Napat orguani* (Arabic), *Notay sag* (Bengali), *Notiya sag* (Bengali), *Papegojamarant* (Swedish), *Papegøjemarant* (Danish), *Pariétaire sauvage* (French), *Phak khom* (Thai), *Phak khom suan* (Thai), *Rajgeera* (Hindi), *Rajgira* (Hindi), *Rajkiri* (Hindi), *Ranga sag* (Bengali), *Ranga sak* (Assamese), *Rau dền* (Vietnamese), *Saek bi reum* (Korean), *Saek maen deu ra mi* (Korean), *St. Joseph's coat*, *Sam saek bi rim* (Korean), *Shiritsa trekhtsvetnaia* (Russian), *Sultan borgi* (Turkish), *Summer poinsettia*, *Surinamesischer Fuchsschwanz* (German), *Tampala* (English, Sinhalese), *Thandukkeerai* (Tamil), *Tota kura* (Telugu), *Vegetable amaranth*, *Wild blite*, and *Xian* (Chinese).

Tricolor is made up of Latin *tri-* (three) and *-color* (colour) components meaning 'three-coloured' with reference to the leaves.

In India and other parts of south-eastern Asia, as well as the south Pacific, the young leaves (harvested when the plant is about one foot high) have long been eaten cooked as a vegetable like spinach (*Spinacia oleracea*) – or added to soup as a flavouring. Today culinary authorities note that it is a familiar sight on sale in Chinese and south-eastern Asian markets and that the Chinese seem usually to coarsely chop the leaves and stir-fry them.

The plant has long been admired widely for its ornamental value. Apparently it was familiar to the Elizabethan and early Stuart gardeners (the late 16th and early 17th Centuries) in this

capacity in England (a long way from their tropical home). It is thought that they were cultivated on hot beds there. Joseph's coat had generated a fan-club on the other side of the Atlantic in new North American gardens by 1709 too.

The whole plant can be used to make yellow or green dyes.

Medicinally, in Malaysia a root decoction has been taken to control the effects of abortion. In India the plant has been recommended to be taken for internal bleeding (particularly from the bowels) and for easing diarrhoea and dysentery – and it has also been applied externally in a poultice or as a wash on ulcers.