

Atriplex hortensis

[Synonyms : *Atriplex hortensis* var. *atrosanguinea*, *Atriplex hortensis* subsp. *nitens*, *Atriplex hortensis* var. *rubra*]

GARDEN ORACHE is an annual. Native to Asia, it has reddish-tinged yellowish-green flowers.

It is also known as *Akaza* (Japanese), *Armolas* (Portuguese), *Armuelle mole* (Spanish), *Arrach*, *Arroche bonne-dame* (French), *Arroche des jardins* (French), *Arroche épinard* (French), *Atriplice degli orti* (Italian), *Bergspinat* (German), *Bledos moles* (Spanish), *Blites*, *Butter leaves*, *Chakwat* (Hindi), *Épinard geant* (French), *Garden arrach*, *Garden orach*, *Gartenmelde* (German), *Havemælde* (Danish), *Lebeda zahradní* (Czech), *Mållspenat* (Swedish), *Melde* (German), *Mountain spinach*, *Oraachu* (Japanese), *Orach*, *Orache*, *Oracle*, *Red mountain spinach*, *Red orache*, *Sea purslane*, *Spanische Spinat* (German), *Tarhamaltsa* (Finnish), *Trädgårdsmålla* (Swedish), *Tuinmelde* (Dutch), and *Yu qian bo cai* (Chinese).

Warning – all parts of the plant are poisonous if taken internally raw or if consumed in large quantities over a prolonged period.

Garden orache can be confused with good-king-henry (*Chenopodium bonus-henricus*) or with wild amaranth (*Amaranthus blitum*).

Hortensis means ‘of or growing in gardens’.

The use of this species as a remedy for an illness called ‘yellow jaundice’ is said to account for the name Orache as it is believed to be a corruption of Latin *aurum* (gold) with reference to the illness.

This annual was introduced to Britain in 1548 (although some authorities claim it was 100 years earlier – or even before the 5th Century during the Roman occupation). It was cultivated by the English as a substitute for spinach (*Spinacia oleracea*) which the French are said to view as far superior despite now growing garden orache themselves more widely for soup. In earlier centuries some authorities record that British peasantry added the leaves to the cooking pot as a flavouring.

Those varieties with other than green leaves eg. white, will turn green when they are cooked.

Garden orache can be used to neutralize French sorrel’s (*Rumex scutatus*) bitter taste.

Garden orache yields a blue dye similar to that obtained from indigo (*Indigofera tinctoria*).

Medicinally, herbalists have recommended the plant for treating sore throats and gout, and they have also prescribed the seeds in wine as a remedy for a so-called ailment ‘yellow jaundice’. Today garden orache is considered to have no medicinal value.