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Lactuca saligna

[Synonyms : *Lactuca amurensis*, *Lactuca indica*, *Lactuca laciniata*, *Lactuca saligna* var. *runcinata*, *Lactuca squarrosa*, *Prenanthes squarrosa*]

LEAST LETTUCE is an annual, biennial or perennial. Native to eastern Asia (including China, India, Indonesia – especially Java, Japan and the Philippines) it has small yellow flowers.

It is also known as *Gwylaeth Leiaf* (Welsh), Indian lettuce, *Locika vrbová* (Czech), *Videsallat* (Swedish), Willowleaf lettuce, and Willow lettuce.

The flower heads open during morning hours.

It is a protected plant in Britain under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Saligna is derived from the genus name *Salix* meaning ‘like plants in that (willow) genus’.

This annual is cultivated as a vegetable (often on a commercial scale) in Asia, especially in China and Japan. It can be seen for sale in local markets and the leaves and stems are eaten boiled. They can also be eaten raw and added to salads and soups.

Medicinally, in China and Japan the leaves are believed to aid digestion and they are also viewed as a useful tonic. Like Canada lettuce (*Lactuca canadensis*), least lettuce has also been used to treat coughs, whooping cough, insomnia, some nervous disorders and rheumatism – and its sap has been applied to warts too.