

New Zealand Spinach

Tetragonia tetragonoides

Hector R. Valenzuela and Stacy Riede

New Zealand Spinach is used and has a similar and milder flavor to spinach, but the plant is very different. Each individual plant may reach 1 to 2 feet in height and is highly branched. It is a heat-tolerant plant and herbaceous. The new and tender shoots and leaves are harvested and new growth will develop at the nodes below the cut. The seeds are large and germinate slowly. Soak the seed overnight prior to sowing to improve germination. Plants should be spaced 12-18" apart with 2-3 ft spacing between rows. When the plants have reached 1-2 ft in height, the top 2-3" of shoots may be harvested and prepared as spinach. The plant will continue to produce new shoots and the new growth can be harvested as needed. When grown commercially the plant is cut 2" above the ground.

Because of its heat tolerance it can be grown year round in Hawaii, at low elevations. Cultural requirements for New Zealand spinach are similar to that of other leafy green vegetables. Composts are recommended to complement garden fertilizer applications and to improve texture and aeration in heavy soils. Mulching is recommended for weed control and to conserve moisture in the summer months.

It is also called aloobate.

New Zealand spinach may be consumed fresh in salads or cooked like spinach. The crop is very nutritious. A serving contains 11 calories and 72% of the Vitamin A, 72% of the Vitamin C, and 10% of the iron required on a daily diet for adults.