

Permaculture Cairns Newsletter

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES WITH SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR 10 YEARS



Care for the Earth, Care for people, Fair share the excess

Permaculture Cairns Incorporated Web Site: www.permaculturecairns.org.au

Tuesday 15TH September 2020

Meeting will be held on Facebook so check it out at

Permaculture Cairns Facebook Page

Permaculture Cairns YouTube Channel

6:30 PM Start

AGENDA

Welcome to all and Info on upcoming local events.

Small Victories

The nutrition of Local Foods

The meeting will be live streamed from Carol's backyard so if you have any questions on creating a nursery at your place make sure you put them in the comments of the live stream for Carol to answer.

The Tropical Veggie Patch

I want to introduce you to another fantastic plant from North Vietnam. It is an Edible Tropical Perennial that we can grow here in our gardens all year round as part of the landscape.

It looks great in the garden, has flowers the native bees like, plus it has much more Calcium and other nutrients than cabbage and it tastes good too.'

It is called Ofenga.



Young leaves are bright yellow with green veins, flowers are sprays of white and pink flowers. It flowers all year.

Botanical name: *Pseuderanthemum whartonianum*; *P. carruthersii* (Acanthaceae)

Plant Characteristics: Ofenga, which originates from North Vietnam, is a tall shrub, growing up to 6m high. The leaves have prominent veins and are oval-shaped, narrowing to a point at both ends. Both species are similarly nutritious. The flowers are purple and white.

Uses: Young leaves can be eaten fresh, but any leaves can be cooked in soups, stews and curries, ideally with coconut cream to increase carotenoid availability and conversion to vitamin A. Some people consider this plant to have the best flavour of all of the recommended leafy vegetables.

Medicinal: Ofenga is used, particularly in Vietnam and Thailand, to treat high blood pressure, diarrhoea, wounds, arthritis, tumours and diabetes.

Availability: Ofenga grows all year in the tropics and is widespread in the Pacific, especially in Solomon Islands (particularly Malaita) and Vanuatu, near the coast in gardens and as hedges, and wild in rainforest. Both species are common on South Tarawa and Funafuti and less so on outer islands. Like chaya and drumstick, it is often found in ALD nurseries in Kiribati.

Propagation methods: Like hedge panax, ofenga is usually grown from stem cuttings around 2cm thick and 40cm long, but can also be grown from seed. The area around the cuttings should be mulched and watered for the first 3 months to help establishment.

How to grow: Ofenga is not as iron efficient as hedge panax but still grows well on atolls, especially with adequate composting.

Threats: Pink wax scale (*Ceroplastes rubens*) and passion vine mealybug (*Planococcus pacificus*) can affect the quality of ofenga leaves.

Harvesting: Young and older leaves can be harvested on a daily basis. Leaves for food can be collected at the same time as a hedge is trimmed, which helps to keep the hedge tidy.

Post harvest and storage: As for most leaves, Ofenga, should be washed with clean water and stored in a cool, shady place. Ideally, leaves should be eaten within a day of picking, but can be frozen for later use.

Project findings/nutritional value: : Samples were collected in Kiribati, Tuvalu and Solomon Islands. Ofenga is an outstanding accumulator of magnesium, second only to purslane in our samples, and is also usually high in calcium and carotenoids, especially lutein (Solomon Islands samples analysed). About two handfuls (100 grams) per person for a meal serving will provide useful nutrition.

Magnesium: This mineral is important in bone formation, energy production, and nerve and muscle function. Furthermore, it has anti-inflammatory effects, and magnesium deficiency is a risk factor for obesity, metabolic syndrome and diabetes.

Calcium: The most important mineral for the growth and maintenance of bones and teeth. Calcium is also important for cellular physiology.

This table compares selected mineral nutrients in leaves of ofenga (*P. whartonianum*), drumstick and taro grown together at ALD Tanaea, South Tarawa, Kiribati in 2014 and English cabbage (average of samples bought from Honiara market, Solomon Islands and Nukualofa market, Tonga in 2012) (concentration in mg/kg dry weight, except N: % dry weight).

Minerals	Fe	Mn	B	Cu	Zn	Ca	Mg	K	S	N
Ofenga	26	24	44	7	33	22000	27000	19600	3100	2.1
Drumstick	65	20	34	5	32	15800	7400	12200	11600	5.4
Taro	34	35	28	12	29	33000	6300	29000	2300	3.8
Cabbage	40	23	12	2	20	5700	1450	29000	3750	2.8

Fe: iron; Mn: manganese; B: boron; Cu: copper; Zn: zinc; Ca: calcium; Mg: magnesium; K: potassium; S: sulphur; N: nitrogen

Analyses conducted by Waite Analytical Services, University of Adelaide, South Australia

*This information was taken from Bruce French's web site
Food Plants Solutions..*

*What a great effort on Bruces part, he has collected an enormous amount of
information on plants growing in the tropical areas of the world.*

*Most of these food plants are more nutritious than the ones we have become
used to eating. Our vegetable plants have been highly altered to suit our
tastes with no regard to nutrient content.*

*I have Ofenga growing in my garden. I didn't realise it was edible until I
checked out Bruce French's website. I tried a small new leaf and was
surprised that it tastes so good.*

*I am cultivating and propagating this plant and will add it to my other
tropical perennial vegetable plants which I have been collecting, growing
and selling for the past thirteen years.*

Eat your Landscape with trees, shrubs, vines and groundcover!!!!

Tree food plants also provide shade.

Moringa, Pigeon Pea, Banana, Plantain, Paw paw, Citrus, Mulberry.

Shrubs.

*Ofenga, Aibika, Sweet Leaf (great hedge plant), Asparagus, Tropical
Lettuce, Timor Lettuce, Amaranth.*

Groundcovers for salads.

*Okinawa Greens, Sambung Greens, Lebanese Cress, Watercress, Timor
lettuce, Ceylon Spinach*

Groundcovers for cooking.

*Brazilian Spinach, Okinawa, Sambung, Kang Kong,
Ceylon spinach, Sweet potato leaves and tubers,*

Root crops

*Cassava, Taro for chips, substitute for potato, Cocoyam substitute for potato,
Ginger, Turmeric, Sweet Potato*

Vines

*Wing Bean, Choko, Lima Bean, Snake Beans, Zucchini
Tromboncion, Cucumber, Watermelon, Pumpkin*

Herbs

Mint, Spearmint, Parsley, Tarragon, Thyme, Lemon Thyme, Basils, Bunching shallots, Garlic Chives, Chives all make great additions to salads. Oregano, Marjoram, Galangal, Cardamon, Lemon Grass, Pandan and Rosemary. All will grow here in Cairns all year round.

Tips on how to use with these plants

All the greens will be enhanced with butter which also collects any fat soluble vitamins from the juices. Add ginger and garlic to steamed or stirfried greens. A touch of Apple cider vinegar helps. And cooking with Coconut cream transforms a tropical vegetable dish. Add Bunching shallots to egg dishes, stirfries and rice dishes. Give them a try.

These plants will appreciate some shade when the hot weather comes and if you keep them moist, they will be lush, tasty and nutritious.

What to plant now -Direct seed leaf amaranth, corn, snake beans, bok choy, gai choy, rocket, cucumbers, Darwin and open leaf lettuce, pumpkin, radish, melons.

Plant some watercress in a shady moist spot, along with Brahmi the memory Lebanese cress and Rungia the mushroom plant, all great for adding to a mixed salad

Herbs - all the basils, tarragon, mints, garlic chives, saw tooth coriander, parsley, chives, lemon thyme, thyme, oregano and spices turmeric, ginger, galangal, cardamom, Vanilla, and mother of all herbs for pizza and pasta.

For Colour for us and flowers for the Birds and Bees, Angelina, Cosmos, Coleus, Salvias, Basils, Marigold, Pentas, Ixoras, Callistemon, Golden Candle and Sunflowers.

Something eating your seedlings off - try diatomaceous earth, it is silica which has sharp edges and will stop beetles from eating your plants off at ground level. If not beetles try a Mollassa drench.

Some really interesting web sites and You tube sites

Foodplantsolutions.org also on Facebook - Bruce French's site
Foodplantsinternational.com

Charles Dowding (on Instagram as well) No-Dig organic gardening in UK but what he does is very interesting. Lots of information. He grows to sell the produce all year and has

some good tips for a market gardener." Even though it is in the Uk just switch the months around June is their summer whereas June is our growing season.

Geoff Lawton has lots of videos on his "Permaculture Research Institute Website

Green Harvest online seeds - this web site has a massive amount of information on plants, seeds, books, tools.

The area of the seeds includes information on where to grow them, how to start them off and lots of other relevant information on the plants.

Check out the Edible Plants and the information of each of them. These are the plants I grow and sell here in Cairns. So if you have one of these Tropical Perennial Plants it might be worth a look at this web site for more information on how to grow them.

SEED SAVING & SEED SHARING

The Community Seed Exchange Mareeba has been sharing seeds within their group for the past few months in response to seeds becoming unavailable due to overwhelming demand.

I would strongly encourage you to share your seeds with the Seed Saver Groups of the Far North, including the Cairns seed savers group.

If you would like to share seeds with the Community Seed Exchange Mareeba please contact Ulla via email pederulla@hotmail.com.

Please let Ulla know what seeds you have to share and what seeds you are looking for.

By growing seeds from this area the plants become acclimatised

Carol Laing