

# Purslane, Verdolaga

*Portulaca oleracea* is a member of the *Chenopodiaceae* (goosefoot) family.

There are two cultivated purslane varieties (green leaf and golden) that produce larger leaves than the wild variety. Wild purslane is also edible.

Purslane leaves and stems are very fleshy and succulent. The small, oval, juicy leaves cluster at the end of the smooth, purplish red, prostrate stems that arise from a single taproot. Once sown in a garden, the plants produce flowers containing thousands of tiny black seeds. If left to go to seed, purslane will re-seed itself for repeat crops.

**Other names.** *Verdolaga* (Spanish); *gwa tsz tsai* (Mandarin Chinese); *ngalog* (Filipino); *pourpier* (French).

## Market Information

**Use.** Whole young plants, and especially young leaves and tender stem tips, can be used as a potherb or eaten raw in salads. The taste is similar to that of watercress or spinach. Seeds can also be eaten raw or ground and made into bread. A 100 gram leaf portion has only 15 calories, but provides more Vitamin A and C and omega-3 fatty acids than most other vegetables.

## Culture

**Climatic requirements.** Purslane grows well in warm weather and is susceptible to frost injury.

**Propagation and care.** When planted in spring, purslane will flower and fruit in May or June. Purslane grows so rapidly that it can be ready for harvest within 3 weeks of planting. If pulled up and left lying on the ground, purslane will re-root and produce seeds. Heavy irrigation encourages growth.



Commercially grown purslane near Encinitas in Southern California. (Photo: Hunter Johnson)



Close-up of a bunch of purslane tips. (Photo: Hunter Johnson)

## Sources

### Seed

The Cook's Garden, P.O. Box 65, Londonderry, VT 05148

Le Jardin du Gourmet, P.O. Box 75, St. Johnsbury Center, VT 05863

Thompson and Morgan, P.O. Box 1308, Jackson, NJ 08527

### More information

Anon. 1989. *Flower and Garden*. July-August 1989.

Anon. 1988. *Organic Gardening*. vol. 35, no. 6.