

Celtuce, Asparagus Lettuce

Lactuca sativa var. *augustana* is a member of the Asteraceae (sunflower) family.

Celtuce looks like a cross between celery and lettuce. The outer leaves resemble those of loose-leaved lettuce, but are a lighter green.

Market Information

Use. Young, tender celtuce leaves can be eaten in salads. The soft, translucent green central core can be eaten fresh, sliced or diced in a salad. In China, the fleshy stem is cut into sections and boiled or stewed. Cooked, celtuce tastes like a cross between a mild summer squash and an artichoke.

The Packer's 1990 Produce Availability and Merchandising Guide listed only one shipper of celtuce in the United States: Plantation Spice Growers Inc. of Goulds, Florida.

Culture

Climatic requirements. Celtuce is a cool-season crop. It requires a mean temperature of 50° to 60°F.

Propagation and care. Plant celtuce from seed in the fall, winter, or early spring. Space the seeds about 8 inches apart in the row, and treat the new crop like regular lettuce. Soon after the outer leaves develop, a central stalk bearing tiny leaves at the top starts to grow. When the stem is 12 to 18 inches long, cut it down into the leafy part of the plant.



Pick the celtuce stem when it reaches a length of 12 to 18 inches. (Photo: Hunter Johnson)

Peel the stem, since its outer edges contain a bitter, milky sap. The soft, translucent, green central core is the edible part. The leaves may be eaten in salads or as greens when they are young and tender, but as they mature they grow bitter and become inedible.

Sources

Seed

W. Atlee Burpee & Co., 300 Park Avenue, Warminster, PA 18974

Nichols Garden Nursery, 1190 North Pacific Highway, Albany, OR 97321

Seeds Blüm, Idaho City Stage. Boise, ID 83706

Sunrise Enterprises. P.O. Box 10058, Elmwood, CT 06110-0058

Tsang and Ma, P.O. Box 5644, Redwood City, CA 94063

More information

Herklots, G. A. C. 1972. *Vegetables in South-East Asia*. George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London.

The Packer. 1990. *1990 Produce availability and merchandising guide*. Vance Publishing Corp., Overland Park, KS.

Rubatzky, Vincent, and Mas Yamaguchi. 1997. *World vegetables, 2d ed.* Chapman and Hall, New York, NY.

Stephens, James. *Minor vegetables*. 1988. *Cooperative Extension Bulletin SP-40*, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

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