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UNG TS'OI FOR THE HOME GARDEN

Ung ts'oi (Ipomea aquatica) also known as Ung Choy, swamp cabbage, kang kong, water spinach, and various other names, is a good source of Vitamin A. Ung ts'oi is used in salads as well as cooked. It is one of the easiest plants to grow provided water, sunlight, and nutrients are constantly supplied.

Several forms of ung ts'oi are available. The upland type, also called the dryland type, generally have smaller, narrower leaves. The paddy or swamp type is especially succulent with leaves that are large and light green in color.

Seed or cuttings are very easy to grow. Sow seeds on loose, moist soil and germination should occur within a week. Cuttings which can be obtained by purchasing ung ts'oi from supermarkets are planted 6-10 inches apart. Large amount of organic matter should be incorporated into the soil before planting as well as throughout the growing season. A fertilizer such as 16-16-16 or 10-20-20 may also be added. Fertilizers are applied every 4-5 weeks during the growing season.

In paddy culture, soil should be constantly moist and a slow flow of water through the plot should be maintained. Water should be stopped, and receded for purpose of fertilization. Ung ts'oi has a high water requirement when it is actively growing and it should not be allowed to suffer drought at anytime.

The dryland types are harvested 60 days after planting and shoots are harvested bimonthly thereafter. In the paddy culture, harvest begins 30-40 days after planting and can thereafter be harvested 7-10 days. Succulent tips are harvested and this promotes lateral and upright branches to develop.

Older stems may especially contain fiber when grown under dryland conditions. Ung ts'oi will produce for a long period of time since it is a perennial; however it should be replanted at least every 2-3 years.

The plant flowers as short days approach. Heavy pruning and fertilizing is recommended to counter this flowering behavior.

Few pests are found on ung ts'oi. Whiteflies, mites and white rust are occasionally found; but with good management practices, these pests should not become a problem to the home gardener.

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