



TALINUM

(Talinum triangulare)

INDIGENOUS
VEGETABLES
OF THE
PHILIPPINES

No. 9 / 2018

TALINUM

*Talinum triangulare***English names:**

Philippine Spinach, Waterleaf,
Fameflower, Sweetheart,
Florida Spinach, Water
Lettuce

Philippine local names:

Talinum, *Talilong* (Tagalog,
Ilokano), *Galaghati* (Subanen),
Biala (Bisaya-Marinduque),
Chinese Alugbati (Hiligaynon)
Simaron (Ilocano)



TALINUM: THE PLANT THAT'S ALWAYS THERE FOR YOU



You may not notice, but you must have already seen Talinum randomly growing in your garden, backyard or other similar places. This is because the weed-like Talinum is a fast-growing herb that grows almost anywhere, from humid to dry environments and from ground level to sea level up to an elevation of 1,000 masl - all year round.

Talinum can grow up to one meter tall when without branches, but it is much shorter when it has branches. It has fleshy/succulent roots, stems and leaves that allow the plant to absorb more water. The leaves are shaped like a spatula and can have either a rounded or a notched tip. The leaves are arranged alternately or spirally at the upper part of the stem. At the lower part, they are arranged alternately.



The flowers are the most eye-catching element of Talinum. The plant may be easily overlooked but it will definitely get your attention once the five-petal pink flowers, opening in the morning, start to show from the tip of the shoot. The flowers are arranged in a triangular flowering axis, earning it the species name *triangulare*.

Talinum has flowers that have both, male (pollen-producing) and female (ovule-producing) parts, and are self-fertile. Its fruit capsules can contain 15-20 seeds.

Although Talinum is succulent, it does not require constant irrigation. It can also withstand hot summer months unlike other leafy greens, and is available year-round.



TALINUM IN STEWS, STIR-FRIES, SALADS & SANDWICHES



The Spanish name for Talinum is *Espinaca de Filipinas*, hence, the name “Philippine Spinach”. The shoots and leaves are consumed as a vegetable especially in the north, and in some other areas in the

Visayas. They are harvested 40 to 55 days from planting like *camote* tops, allowing the plant to grow new shoots.



TALINUM (*Talinum triangulare*)

Blanching or steaming are the two common cooking methods for Talinum. This is to maintain the fresh quality of the leaves.

As a leafy vegetable, Talinum may be added to stews in the last minute of cooking. It also goes very well with fish. The leaves make a great addition to vegetable stews like *dinengdeng* but can also be the main ingredient to a dish such as *inadobong* Talinum. It can also be sir-fried with onion, garlic, tomatoes, salt and black pepper. When boiled long enough, Talinum has a distinct slimy texture like *saluyot* – the slimy quality that is both loved and loathed, depending on where you are in the Philippines or which ethno-linguistic group you are dining with. In Visayas and Mindanao, those who recognize this vegetable call it “Chinese *alugbati*”, again comparing it with the more familiar *alugbati* of the Bisaya and its distinct slimy quality.

In general, though, Talinum is less preferred compared to camote tops, chili pepper (*siling labuyo*) leaves, and squash shoots. For some, it is a substitute for *alugbati* and *saluyot* (when aiming for the slimy texture). When overcooked, Talinum turns brown and tends to taste sour, making it unappealing.





In the province of Romblon, retired school principal Mrs. Agnes Lambio recounts how Talinum grew abundantly in backyards during her childhood years in her hometown, the island community of Sibale, Concepcion.

Yet, among the fisherfolk of Romblon just like Mrs. Lambio's father, Talinum is a popular vegetable ingredient for fish dishes. Aside from its nutritive value and high fiber content, it can also offset the fishy stink or *lansa*. Thus, Talinum was almost invariably reported as a leafy vegetable for fish dishes.

Fresh leaves can also be used in salads and sandwiches which give the particular dish a certain freshness and crunch due to its juiciness.



Studies show that Talinum contains considerable amounts of oxalic acid, a poisonous and sour-tasting acid. Ingestion of too much oxalic acid can be dangerous so you should be mindful of how much you consume. Blanching, which is the method of dipping quickly in boiling water, removes this compound. This could be the reason for the common practice of blanching Talinum. If it is not blanched, leaves must be consumed in smaller quantities.

At UPLB, this weed-like vegetable was also prepared as Talinum Tempura in a class in Economic Botany.

Interestingly, some observed that chicken seem to have an affinity for Talinum, as neighborhood chicken have been found constantly pecking on its leaves and flowers. A similar behavior was noted among birds, which seemed to go more for the flowers - or possibly, the seeds.



SINABAWAN NA ISDA WITH TALINUM LEAVES

Ingredients:

- 250 grams *ginto-ginto* fish (or any coral fish)
- 300 grams freshly-picked Talinum leaves
- 2 medium sized tomatoes or *kamias* (bilimbi fruit), sliced;
or sampalok
- 3 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 small red onion, sliced
- 1 thumb-sized garlic, crushed
- Black pepper, crushed
- Salt or fish sauce (*patis*) to taste



Procedure:

1. Clean fish thoroughly. Drain and set aside.
2. Remove leaves from the stem. Wash and drain.
3. In a saucepan, sauté garlic, onion, ginger, and tomatoes.
4. Add the fish, cover the pan, and let it cook with sautéed ingredients for three minutes (depending on the size of fish).
5. Add two cups water and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and let it simmer for 5-7 minutes.
6. Add black pepper and salt or fish sauce and adjust amount depending on taste.
7. Add Talinum leaves by simply piling them on top. Turn the heat off and cover the saucepan, allowing the steam to cook the leaves slightly. Serve immediately.

Serves 4-6





TALINUM (*Talinum triangulare*)



DID YOU KNOW?

THAT **100 GRAMS OF BOILED TALINUM LEAVES** CONTAIN

| | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Water | g | 93.80 |
| Energy | kcal | 23.00 |
| Protein | g | 0.80 |
| Fat | g | 0.20 |
| Carbohydrate | g | 4.60 |
| Crude Fiber (Diet Fiber) | g | 0.40 |
| Ash | g | 0.60 |
| Calcium | mg | 37.00 |
| Phosphorus | mg | 7.00 |
| Iron | mg | 4.20 |
| β-carotene | μg | 790.00 |
| Total Vitamin A (RE) | μg | 132.00 |
| Thiamine | mg | 0.03 |
| Ribloflavin | mg | 0.05 |
| Niacin | mg | 0.20 |
| Ascorbic Acid | mg | 14.00 |

Source: Department of Science and Technology - Food and Nutrition Research Institute (DOST-FNRI). The Philippines Food Composition Tables 1997. Page 42



ORNAMENTAL USE

Talinum is occasionally used as a potted border plant or as edging plant in landscaping because of its unique bright green foliage accented with dainty, pink flowers. Thus, it is not unusual to find Talinum plants in plant boxes beautifying homes and school yards. While it is widely dispersed, it is often recognized more as an ornamental than as a vegetable.





TALINUM (*Talinum triangulare*)



TALINUM IN FOLK MEDICINE

Talinum has many healing properties known from all over the world. Crushed leaves are known to relieve swellings, inflammations or sores while decoctions of the plant are used to relieve painful eyes and to aid recovery from blows and falls. Leaf extracts have also been proven to possess significant antioxidants. Aside from these, Talinum is known to regulate blood sugar levels and cure hypertension.

In Sri Lanka, leaves and stems are used to treat lung disorders, male infertility and impotence, loss of energy, spleen disorders, diarrhea, and dysmenorrhea. In Indonesia, roots are made into a tonic drink.



ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

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Focus group discussions

Barangay Lucero
Municipality of Jamindan, province of Capiz

Barangay Liberty
Municipality of Tampakan, province of South Cotabato

Barangay San Jose
Municipality of Tapaz, province of Capiz

Barangay Tudok and Barangay Datal D'Ilanag
Municipality of T'boli, province of South Cotabato

Barangay Agpay
Municipality of Burgos, province of La Union

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These small pamphlets are intended to spark renewed interest in the conservation, use, production and promotion of Philippine indigenous vegetables that have always been part of Filipino food culture and are key to household food and nutrition security.

