

Amaranth is a popular gluten free grain, but did you know the entire plant can be used for both food and medicine?

Actions/Properties:

Anti-inflammatory, tonic, high in iron, calcium, magnesium and other minerals, high in plant protein; 15%-18% protein, antioxidant rich, contains both essential amino acids; lysine and methionine, when combined with wheat or rice it becomes a well absorbed, complete protein, good source of vitamins B2, B3, B5, B6 and folic acid, contains cholesterol inhibitors.

Uses:

- Strengthens the cardiovascular system, which helps in preventing heart attacks and strokes
- Lowers cholesterol
- Digestive support; also helps with upset stomach and diarrhea
- Can be used to treat hemorrhaging from the bowels
- Blood purifier
- Used to normalize menstrual cycle
- Aids in detoxing body systems
- Supports cellular metabolism
- Can help prevent chronic degenerative diseases
- Anti-inflammatory properties can help in treating joint inflammation
- Bruised leaves can reduce tissue swelling sprains, injuries and bug bites
- The lunasin in amaranth is being studied for its ability to halt the growth of cancer cells

Herb Preparations:

- Tincture (seeds)
- Tea (leaf, flower and seeds)
- Salve (leaves)
- Poultice (sprains and insect bites)
- Fresh leaves (when young and tender)
- Blanched or steamed leaves (when more mature)
- Flour (from ground seed)
- Seeds (sprinkled into food)

Culinary Arts:

- Grind seed into a flour and mix 25% of amaranth flour to 75% other flour, like rice or wheat. Toasting the seeds before use enhances the flavor and makes them more digestible.
- Cook the seeds as a grain in your meals. 1 part seed to 2 1/2 parts water. Cook like rice, cover and simmer for 20-25 minutes. Increase the water to 3 parts and the grain becomes mushier and can be used as a breakfast cereal.
- Sprout the seeds for optimum nutrition.
- Add seeds to soups, they will thicken and enrich your soup.
- Use fresh, young, tender leaves in your salads, they have a spinach-like flavor.
- Once leaves are more mature, cook or steam to make the iron more absorb-able and reduce oxalic acid. They can be cooked like chard and collard greens.

Care/Harvesting:

There are 60 different species of Amaranth growing in North and South America. Many are cultivated as ornamental landscape plants, but you can find them growing in wild disturbed, sunny places as well. The seeds can range in color from buff to dark purple, deep red, green, orange, pink and white. Amaranth can be found in the wild and is also know as pigweed.

- Sprinkle seeds in a sunny spot, two weeks after the last frost and keep moist.
- Once sprouted, thin to about 1-3 feet apart, depending on the variety. Some can get up to 7 feet tall.
- Amaranth is pretty easy to grow, it is drought and heat resistant so water as needed.
- Harvest leaves anytime - fresh leaves for salads when young and tender, larger leaves steamed or cooked.
- Seeds are ready to harvest when the flower head is rubbed and seeds readily fall out. Cut flower heads and dry on screens. Once completely dry, put in a container or bag and shake vigorously or rub the heads.
- Leaves can be dried for future use in teas and salves.