Sauropus is also known to have a number of medicinal properties.

- A decoction from the roots is said to relieve urinary disorders and treat fever.
- Leaves are given as vegetables to nursing mothers to stimulate breast milk production.
- Leaves are also known to help the womb recover after giving birth.

Other ways of food preparation

- Young sauropus shoots, leaves, flowers, and fruits are eaten raw or cooked.
- Leaves and stem tips are used as a salad or steamed and added to stir-fries, rice and egg dishes, soups or casseroles.
- Young shoots fried with chili pepper and dried shrimp.
- Young shoots are sold as a delicacy (Malaysia).
- Fruits are candied.
- A green dye obtained from rubbing and squeezing the leaves is used as food coloring for pastries, rice, and preserves.

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Know Your IVs

Sauropus

Introduction

Sauropus or *Sauropus androgynus* is one of the most important indigenous vegetables in Southeast Asia, where it is grown in homegardens or commercial market gardens. Its popularity as a leafy green vegetable is attributed to its fast growth, abundant fruiting, and lack of pest and disease problems. It is very easy to grow by stem cuttings and can be harvested as early as four months after planting.

Local Name

English — *Sauropus, star gooseberry, sweet leaf bush*
Cambodia — *ngub*
Indonesia — *katuk, babing, simani*
Laos — *hvaan baanz*
Malaysia — *cekur manis, sayur manis*
Philippines — *binahian*
Thailand — *phak-waan-baan*
Vietnam — *rau ng[os]t, b[oof] ng[os]t*

Biodiversity

The exact origin of Sauropus is unknown. It occurs wild and cultivated in India, Sri Lanka, southern China, Indochina, and throughout Southeast Asia.

Sauropus is an erect, perennial shrub which can grow up to 3.5 m, but is best kept at a height of 1-2 m for vegetable production. It has small, upright main stems and oval to circular dark green leaves, usually with faint grayish spots. The presence or absence of the grayish spot according to some Thai is indication of origin and taste. Its small, red flowers develop into round to angular white or purple fruit capsules that measure 1.5 cm in diameter. Leaves and stem tips are said to have a pleasant taste, much like that of fresh garden peas, with a slight nutty flavor. Raw sauropus has a strong aroma and sweet taste. When cooked, the leaves retain their dark green color and firm texture, and taste slightly acidic.

A tender variety developed in Sabah, Malaysia is called "Sabah vegetable". Its stem resemble asparagus in texture and has excellent flavor. It was developed using a technique for forcing the shoot tips to grow extra long and tender by applying plenty of manure, water and sometimes shade. Known locally as sayur manis, this "tropical asparagus" is sold to upscale restaurants and exported.

Cultivation

- Propagated vegetatively thru cuttings 20-40 cm long; seed longevity is poor.
- Suggested spacing:
  Commercial scale: 30-40 cm x 30-40 cm
  Home garden: 10 cm apart in row
- Prune regularly to 1-2 cm tall.

Nutritional value

Sauropus is highly nutritious. Its protein content is higher than other leafy vegetables. Fresh leaves are an excellent source of provitamin A carotenoids, vitamins B and C, protein and minerals. Mature leaves have more nutrients than young leaves.

Warning:
It has been reported that excessive consumption of leaf extracts may be toxic. The leaves contain considerable amount of the alkaloid papavarine (580 mg/ 100 gm fresh leaf). Excessive consumption of the leaf cause dizziness, drowsiness and constipation. Papavarine in uncooked Sauropus affects vasodilation and may cause bronchiolitis obliterans, a progressive respiratory distress disease. The harmful effect is due to consumption of large quantities of uncooked leaves [4.5 kg] and drinking raw juice rather than stir-fried or boiled leaves.

Nutrition Value (per 100 g edible portion)	
Water	79.8 g
Protein	7.6 g
Fat	1.8 g
Carbohydrates	6.9 g
Fiber	1.9 g
Ash	2.0 g
vitamin A	10000 IU
vitamin B_1	0.23 mg
vitamin B_2	0.15 mg
vitamin C	136 mg
Ca	234 mg
Fe	3.1 mg
P	64 mg
Energy value	310 kJ/100 g
Antioxidant (by ABTSM) water	179 µm/g (High)

Utilization

Aside from its use as food, Sauropus can also be utilized in various ways.

- Leaves are used as cattle and poultry feed (India).
- Leaves are also planted as a live fence in home gardens.

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