**PURSLANE**

*Portulaca oleracea*  
[por-tew-LAK-uh awl-lur-RAY-see-uh]

**Family:** Portulacaceae

**Names:** pussley, pursley, pigweed, garden purslane verdolage, verdolaga; Portulak (German); purslane, pourpier, pourcellaine (French); porcellana, portulaca (Italian); Gartenportulak (German); Verdolaja, Verdolaga (Spanish); ma chi xian (Chinese); Tségha’nilchi’ – breeze through rock (Navajo); xucul (Mayan)

**Description:** Thick, matlike groundcover, very succulent with red stems. It grows to a height of 8 inches and a width of 10 inches. The flowers are bright yellow and 3/8 inch across. The leaves are thick, succulent ovals up to 1 ¼ inches long. It blooms from June to September. It is possibly native to India but well established from Greece to China and introduced elsewhere. Golden or yellow purslane *Portulaca oleracea sativa* is more attractive and grows more erect but has the same taste.

**Cultivation:** Annual and sometimes biennial it germinates in 7-15 days. Space 6-8 inches apart in soil that is well drained and well watered with a pH of 5.5-8 in full sun. Ready to harvest in 6-8 weeks. If the plants get ahead during the growing season, cut them back to 3-4 inches and they will send out tender new shoots within 7-10 days. Old stems may be stripped of their leaves and pickled.

**History:** The botanical name *oleracea* is Latin for “potherb”. *Portulaca* may mean “milk carrier,” from *potare*, Latin “to carry” and *lac*, “milk”, describing the juice that exudes from the broken stems. Some scholars think it is derived from *portula*, a “little gate,” due to the gatelike cover on the seed capsules. The Romans enjoyed puns and called purslane *porcella*, or “little pig,” as a pun on its name. This became the Italian *porcellana*, the old French *porcelaine* and eventually “purslane” in English. *Oleracea* means “of the vegetable garden or kitchen.” It was brought north in to Europe and provided not only food, but was one of the four “cold” seeds of medieval medicine that cooled “hot” complaints such as “heat in the liver.” High in vitamin C, it used to be a scurvy remedy. By the 1700s, it had made itself so much at home in the US that some regarded it as a native American plant. It was thought to be a cure for “blastings by lighting or planets and burning of gunpowder.”

** Constituents:** alkaloids, glycoside, sterols, essential oil, calcium salts, DOPA, resins, organic acids, vitamin C (600 milligrams per 100 grams of fresh plant), oxalic acid,
potassium slats. Chinese research also lists noradrenaline and dopamine as constituents.

**Energetics:** sour; cold

**Meridians/Organs affected:** colon, liver, spleen, large intestine

**Properties:** alterative, refrigerant, bactericide, antipyretic, antidote, antidysenteric, antiphlogistic

**Ritual Uses:** Purslane was believed to guard against evil spirits if strewn around a person’s bed. It was considered to be a sure cure for blastings by lightening and burning of gunpowder. Purslane is ideal for those made uneasy by the darkness of night, who fall prey to nightmares and who need protection against those unknown things which roam the dark. Growing purslane beneath the bedroom window, placing it in a vase on one’s nightstand or using a bunch of dried purslane to aspurge the bedroom when cleaning it are a few methods available. Purslane has the ability to dispel unwholesome energy through the generation of positive energy. It can be added to Mystic Rites Incense to assist in the development of your higher spiritual forces. Can be used as an elixir or magickal tonic. Herb of the Moon.

**Culinary Uses:** Purslane has a crisp texture and a sharp, almost hot, vinegary flavor. Sometimes compared to asparagus in taste, purslane is used in salads and soups, steamed as a garnish, or is pickled for winter salads. It has long been eaten in the Middle East and India and is found in the Middle Eastern salad *fattoush*. In China, the herb is boiled, then mixed with eggs. Australian Aborigines ground the seeds, making a paste eaten fresh or baked. Settlers boiled and ate the leaves. The French soup *bonne femme* combines purslane with French sorrel. Mexicans eat purslane as a side dish. They boil the leaves for a few minutes, then fry them in oil with a little chopped onion, adding slices of cheese and serving them when the cheese is hot and melting.

Best just raw or very lightly cooked it can be added also to scrambled eggs or Mexican tomato sauce. Long cooking causes it to develop a slippery texture and change of color, so add the chopped leaves no sooner than the last minute of cooking times.

**Medicinal uses:**
The sticky, broken leaves of fresh purslane soothe burns, stings and swellings. The juice was once used for treating earaches and to “fasten” teeth and soothe sore gums. Purslane has been considered valuable in the treatment of urinary and digestive problems. The diuretic effect of the juice makes it useful in the alleviation of bladder ailments-for example, difficulty in passing urine. The plant’s mucilaginous properties also make it a soothing remedy for gastrointestinal problems such as dysentery and diarrhea. In Europe it’s been turned into a cough syrup for sore throats. Purslane is the richest known plant source of Omega-3 acids, found mostly in fish oils. These fatty acids reduce blood cholesterol and pressure, clotting, and inflammation and may increase immunity. Recommended medicinal dosage is 15-30 grams. Use for scours in goats.

Crush the fresh plant material to apply as a poultice to stop bleeding and heal ulcers, wounds and sores. Fresh juice of the plant can be taken with sugar and honey to relieve dry coughs. Mash stems and leaves to apply as a poultice over the forehead to alleviate headaches caused by over-exposure to the sun.

A dose of 1.5 and 2.0 gm/kg of the entire dried plant showed hypoglycemic activity in rabbits after 8 and 12 hours. Uterine stimulant effect was demonstrated in mice and rats using a water extract of the leaves.
**TCM:** In Chinese herbal medicine, purslane is employed for similar problems and for appendicitis. The Chinese also use the plant as an antidote for wasp stings and snake bite. Clinical trials in China indicate that purslane has a mild antibiotic effect. In one study, the juice was shown to be effective in treating hookworms. Other studies suggest that it is valuable against bacillary dysentery. When injected, extracts of the herb induce powerful contractions of the uterus. Taken orally, purslane juice weakens uterine contractions. Indications: amoebic dysentery; hemorrhoids; abscesses due to heat excess. The Chinese eat this plant as a vegetable; may be used safely in high dosages; the fresh herb is best for all therapeutic purposes. Dosage 10-30g

**Navajo:** The plant is said to cure stomachache and is used in a smoke treatment to clean out the body; the smoke causes the patient to vomit and thus, cleans him out.

**Toxicity:** Do not take medicinally during pregnancy

**Recipes:**

**Purslane Salad with Avocado and Bacon**

4 handfuls purslane leaves about 7 oz trimmed weight
creamy dressing
1 avocado
juice of ½ lemon or 1 lime
5 oz streaky bacon, diced small
fresh herbs in season, finely chopped

Prepare the purslane leaves. Make a bed of them on a round serving dish and sprinkle with some dressing. Peel the avocado and cut in 8 segments. Arrange them like the spokes of a wheel over the purslane. Sprinkle with lemon or lime juice. Fry the bacon dice without any fat in a heavy-based pan until golden and crusty. Lift them out of the rendered fat with a slotted spoon and scatter them over the salad. Sprinkle on the chopped herbs and serve

**CREAMY DRESSING**
Salt and pepper
10 oz oil
3 ½ oz vinegar
1 tsp mustard
1 tsp sugar or honey
1 egg

Blend or process ingredients in a blender or food processor thinning down if necessary with a little cold water. Store in a covered jar for up to 4 days.

**Warm Salad of Purslane with Chicken Livers and Herb Vinegar**

4 good handfuls purslane, about 7 oz trimmed weight
1 oz oil, of which a proportion can be walnut oil
4 Tbsp vinegar
1 tsp coarse grain mustard
1 tsp honey
salt and pepper
12 oz chicken livers, trimmed and chopped
2 Tbsp oil
3 Tbsp flavored vinegar

Pull the leaves off the purslane, wash and spin them dry; discard the stalks. Whisk together the oil, vinegar, mustard, honey, salt and pepper to make a thick dressing. Arrange the purslane on four plates and sprinkle the dressing on top. Season the chicken livers and fry them in the hot oil for 2-3 minutes until just stiffened but still pink inside. Scatter them over the salads. Deglaze the pan with the vinegar and sprinkle on top. Serve at once.

(Fruits of the Forest)

**Purslane with Melon Salad with Prawns**

3 handfuls purslane, about 5 oz trimmed weight
1 pink-fleshed melon
creamy dressing
30 peeled cook shrimp
chopped fresh herbs (your choice)

Strip the leaves off the purslane and discard the stalks. Arrange the leaves around the edge of 6 salad plates. Cut the melon in half, discard the seeds and scoop out the flesh with a melon scoop. Put a heap of melon flesh in the middle of the plate. Pour some dressing over the purslane and melon. Arrange the
pawns on top of the salads and sprinkle with the chosen herbs. (Fruits of the Forest)

**Fairy Food Casserole**
2 cups raw wild rice
handful wild oregano
2 Tbsp wild mint
1 Tbsp wild catnip
1 cup wild purslane
6 wild onions
5 leaves garden basil
3 cloves garlic
1 cup wild mushrooms, chopped
2 tsp olive oil
1 Tbsp wild mustard seeds
3 Tbsp yellow dock seeds
handful of wild flowers

Boil rice until done and set aside. Collect our wild herbs and mushrooms. Chop herbs, purslane, wild onions, basil and garlic coarsely. Mix with rice. Saute mushrooms with a little more garlic and add to rice. Add olive oil to rice and mix well. Place in casserole dish, shred goat cheese on top and bake for 30 minutes at 350F. Garnish with yellow dock seeds, mustard seeds and wild flowers. Serve on a bed of leafy greens. Serves 10-12. (An Herbal Feast)

**Purslane Dip**
1 cup chopped purslane
1 pint sour cream
3 scallions, finely chopped
1 small container of red caviar
salt, pepper or Tabasco

Combine all the ingredients and place in a serving bowl. Refrigerate for 1 hour. Serve with chips or crackers. Serves 4-6. This dip will lose its crunchiness if prepared too much in advance. (The Wild Gourmet)

**Purslane Cheese Ball**
1 cup of fresh or frozen purslane leaves
2 packages of cream cheese, softened
2 Tbsp of purslane seeds


**Spaghetti and Purslane Salad, Greek Style**
6 oz spaghetti
2 cups purslane flowers, leaves and stems, washed and chopped medium fine
1 medium clove garlic, finely chopped
1 cup feta cheese in ½ inch cubes
12 Greek olives
4 Tbsp olive oil
3 Tbsp lemon juice
½ tsp basil
½ tsp oregano
½ tsp salt
freshly ground black pepper to taste

Cook the spaghetti, rinse under cold water, drain and cool. In a large salad or serving bowl combine the spaghetti, purslane, garlic, feta cheese and Greek olives. In a small bowl combine the olive oil, lemon juice, basil, oregano, salt and a few grindings of black pepper. Pour over the spaghetti and purslane and serve. (The Wild Plant Companion)

**Purslane Gumbo**
1 Tbsp oil
1 ½ cups purslane tips
2 cup chopped, skinned tomatoes
1 pkg frozen corn or 1 ½ cup fresh, cut from the cob
2 small green peppers
½ cup chopped wild onion (white parts only)
¼ cup uncooked rice
1 Tbsp lemon juice
3 cup beef broth
1 bay laurel leaf

Heat oil in skillet and cook purslane until just tender; this will reduce the mucilaginous nature. Put in the soup pot with the other ingredients and simmer gently or until rice is tender. Remove bay leaf. To make this soup heartier, add 1 cup diced chicken or beef, cooked. (The Wild Foods Cookbook)

**Cucumber, Onion and Purslane Salad**
3 cucumbers
2 very small fresh onions, white or red
1 ½ cups purslane
2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley
1 small garlic clove
Salt
2 teaspoons red wine vinegar
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

If the skin of the cucumber is sweet and tender, leave it on. Otherwise, peel it. Halve the cucumber lengthwise and scoop out the seeds; chop the cucumber into bite-sized pieces. Quarter the onions, slice them crosswise very thin, then combine them with the cucumbers in a bowl. Wash the purslane in a few changes of water -- it's often sandy since it grows along the ground -- dry it, then break it into small clumps. The whole plant is tender so stems can go in too. Add it to the cucumbers, along with the parsley. Pound the garlic with a few pinches salt until it's smooth, then add the vinegar and whisk in oil. Check the balance and adjust, if needed. Pour over the vegetables and toss well. Refrigerate for up to one hour before serving.

**Tzatziki with Purslane**

1½ cups plain yogurt
1 medium-sized cucumber, peeled and cubed
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 cup coarsely chopped purslane leaves
salt and pepper to taste

Combine all the ingredients and mix thoroughly. Put the mixture into a serving bowl and decorate with purslane sprigs. (Wild Foods)

**Lebanese Fattouch Salad with Purslane**

3 ripe tomatoes cut into large chunks
1 large Red Bell Pepper, seeded and chopped into medium size pieces
1 large Yellow Bell Pepper, seeded and chopped into medium size pieces
1 large Green Bell Pepper, seeded and chopped into medium size pieces
1 large Red Onion, thinly sliced
3 green onions, cut diagonally
2 medium Cucumbers, peeled, seeded and sliced diagonally into medium size pieces
2 rounds Pita bread, crisply toasted and crumbled
1 bunch Italian parsley, chopped finely
1 bunch fresh Mint, chopped finely
1 cup purslane
1 tsp sumac
1 clove garlic, minced
juice of 3-4 lemons
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
salt and freshly ground pepper

In a large bowl, combine tomatoes, peppers, red onion and cucumbers. In a smaller bowl, combine Italian parsley, fresh mint, purslane, sumac, garlic, lemon juice and olive oil. Add this mixture to vegetables and mix well. Add Pita crumbs and toss. Serve chilled.

**Verdolago Con Queso**

1 quart purslane including stems
½ cup Monterey Jack cheese, shredded

Collect tender purslane, including the stems, and carefully rinse to remove any sand or soil. Gently boil for about two minutes or until tender. Drain the water and chop the purslane into smaller pieces. Return the purslane to the frying pan and shred the jack cheese over it. Keep the purslane in the pan just until the cheese melts. Be careful not to overmelt the cheese. Serve warm. Serves 2.

**Pickled Purslane**

1 quart purslane stems and leaves
3 garlic cloves, sliced
1 quart apple cider vinegar
10 peppercorns

Clean the purslane stems and leaves by rinsing with fresh water. Cut into 1" pieces and place in clean jars with lids. Add the spices and pour the vinegar over the purslane. Keep this in the refrigerator and wait at least two weeks before using. Serve as a side dish with omelets and sandwiches.

**Traveler’s Joy**

3 cups purslane, chopped
1 hard-boiled egg, sliced
½ cup amaranth leaves
¼ cup cheddar cheese, diced into small bits
½ onion
1 cup chickweed
1 ripe avocado
1 tsp garlic salt
juice of ½ lemon

Much of this salad can be gathered on the trail (or in your backyard, for that matter). Chop the purslane, chickweed, amaranth, and onion into bite sized bits. Add the avocado, peeled and diced. Add one hard-boiled egg, sliced. Mix in approximately ¼ cup of cheddar cheese which has been cut into small bits. Squeeze the lemon over the salad, add the garlic salt, and mix well. If you have them, you can add chia seeds and one tablespoon of mayonnaise.

**Purslane Stew Served with Yogurt and Garlic Sauce**

2 lb purslane or spinach leaves
3 Tbsp unsalted butter
1 cup chopped onions
¼ lb ground lamb or beef
1 tomato, peeled and chopped
1 cup meat stock or water
¼ cup uncooked rice
salt and freshly ground pepper

Cut off purslane roots, wash in plenty of water, and drain. Heat butter in a large heavy pan and cook onions about 8 minutes. Add meat and cook, stirring frequently, until it browns. Add tomato and cook a minute longer. Add purslane and cook, covered, 10 minutes, until the leaves become wilted. Stir in the stock or water, bring to a boil, and stir in the rice. Adjust with salt and pepper, cover, and cook gently until rice is cooked, about 20 minutes. Add more liquid as necessary. The finished dish should have a little liquid but not be watery. Serve as is or with Yogurt-and-Garlic-Sauce and bread. Pass the sauce separately.

**Sauce:**

2 cups yogurt
2 tsp crushed garlic
salt

For the sauce, blend all the ingredients together with a wooden spoon until the mixture is smooth and creamy. (Classical Turkish Cooking)

**Verdolago Con Huevos**

2 cups purslane, with stems, diced
1 cup wild or domestic onion
6 eggs
butter

Carefully clean and rinse the purslane. The entire above-ground plant can be used as long as it is still tender. Add the diced onion and purslane to a heated and buttered cast-iron skillet. Cook for about five minutes. Add the eggs and cook omelet-style. Serve with a tomato slice. Serves three.

**Fried Purslane**

1 cup purslane growing tips
ground bread crumbs
flour
beaten eggs

Collect the tender new tips of purslane--about the last two or three inches from the stems. Rinse these in water to remove any sand. Roll them (or shake them) in flour until thoroughly floured, and then dip in the beaten eggs. Cover each purslane stalk with bread crumbs. This process is easiest to do if you simply line up the three dishes of flour, eggs, and bread crumbs, and do the breading production line style. When the breading is done, fry or sauté each purslane stalk for about five minutes or until golden brown. Serve with catsup, mustard, or sour cream. This is a unique hors d’oeuvre.

**Mexican Purslane Stuffing**

1 Tbsp vegetable oil
1 small onion, finely chopped
1 medium-size ripe tomato, chopped but no skinned
1 Serrano or jalapeno chili, finely chopped, or freshly cracked black pepper to taste
2-3 tsp low-sodium soy sauce
1 egg beaten
Set aside a few raw springs of purslane for garnish. Steam or blanch the rest until tender-crisp (three to five minutes). Drain thoroughly, transfer to a plate covered with several layers of paper towels and blot dry. In a large pan, sauté garlic and onion in vegetable oil until soft. Add tomato and chili, and sauté until the mixture becomes sauce-like. Season with soy sauce. (If you aren't using the chili, add freshly ground black pepper.) Sauté until mixture is warm and the flavors marry. When ready to serve, add the beaten egg to the warm mixture in the pan and mix gently. The egg will bind the mixture loosely but should not harden into scrambled eggs. Garnish plate servings with reserved sprigs. Can be used as filling for tortilla and pitas. 

YIELD: 4 servings

**Peach and Purslane Salad**

Hazelnut oil
1 handful of freshly picked purslane leave
1 ripe peach or nectarine
3 or 4 hazelnuts, toasted and sliced
freshly cracked coriander seed

Brush a small salad plate with hazelnut oil. Peel the peach but leave the skin on if you are using a nectarine. Slice the fruit finely and arrange on the plate in two rows of a semicircle. Arrange the leaves of purslane in curved lines to complete the circle of salad. Use the smallest leaves to decorate the spaces between the slices of fruit. Trickle the oil over the salad and sprinkle the hazelnuts over the top. Season lightly with freshly cracked coriander seeds.

**Purslane Omelette**

A generous handful of tender sprigs of Purslane
1 Clove of Garlic, crushed
3 Eggs, lightly beaten with one tablespoon of cold water
2 Tbsps. Olive Oil
Pinch of salt.
A dash of freshly ground white pepper

Heat the oil in an omelette skillet. Add the garlic, and fry to golden; brown. Add purslane and cook slowly until soft. Put over high heat. Pour in the eggs. Stir quickly; spreading evenly. Roll as a French omelette.

**Purslane and Baby Greens with Cucumber and Shredded Cabbage**

Serves 6
2 cups very young purslane leaves (3/4 pound uncleaned)
½ cup scallions, white part only, thinly sliced into rings
1 cup peeled, seeded and cubed cucumber
1 cup shredded cabbage, soaked in salted water for 30 minutes, rinsed and drained
2 cups baby greens or mesclun
2 Tbs. fresh lemon juice or more to taste
3 to 4 Tbs. extra virgin olive oil
salt
freshly ground black pepper
sprigs of fresh mint, salad burnet and chives for garnish

Wash the purslane and pat dry with paper toweling. Combine the purslane with the scallions, cucumber, cabbage and baby greens. In a separate dish, combine the lemon juice, olive oil, salt and pepper to taste, mixing well. Toss with the greens; garnish with the mint, burnet and chives. Serve as an accompaniment to grilled fish, lamb kabobs or just good bread.

**References:**


