Red Veined Sorrel

Rumex sanguineus



Height: Up to 40cm

Suitable for: Sun or partial shade in good moist soil

Summary: This is an easy-to-grow perennial herb with a distinctive tangy lemony flavour, used in salads and soups, and also as baby leaf for 'cut and come again' salad production. It has unusual and striking foliage - light green leaves with blood red veining, making it as attractive in the garden as on the plate.

More information:

This sorrel is a beautiful and unusual culinary herb. It is a very useful perennial with a productive season which runs from March until the first frosts.

It is hardy and easy to grow and it does best in dampish soils so a bit of extra water during the summer heat will give much better leaves for picking. When the plant starts to throw up flowering shoots the leaves become tougher and have less flavour, so cut off the flower stalks as they appear.

Of all the various types of sorrel this is the most ornamental, with striking bright red veins and mid-ribs. As well as traditional planting in the vegetable garden it is certainly attractive enough for the flower border, and will make a dramatic specimen if grown in a container. Just remember that it will need extra watering if pot grown.

- The smallest young leaves are best for salads, and are always a welcome first crop in spring to brighten up the salad bowl. The leaves have a sharp lemony tang which can be quite strong, so use sparingly to begin with.
- As well as in salads, sorrel enhances the flavour of fish and eggs - add a few shreds of finely sliced young leaves at the last moment.
- As the leaves get bigger they can be cooked and added to dishes in the same way as spinach, heat dulls the flavour a little so you can add more leaves without the fear of making the dish too tart.
- In mid summer when the leaves are large they can be wrapped around joints of meat such as pork or chicken, or whole fish such as salmon or mackerel for baking. They act as a tenderiser as well as a flavouring, to brown the meat remove the leaves 30 minutes before the end of cooking time.
- Sorrel puree is really easy to make, just take a handful of washed leaves and remove the mid-ribs. Throw them, still wet, into a small pan with some melted butter. The leaves melt down almost immediately to give a lemony puree which tastes great with fish or eggs. A little cream can be added if you wish. This puree freezes well, so make it when you have a glut of sorrel for winter use.
- Sorrel soup is a classic way to cook sorrel and makes a tasty supper with some crusty bread.

Sorrel soup

A classic way to cook sorrel and makes a tasty supper with some crusty bread. Serves 4 – 6 people.

300g sorrel leaves - stalks & mid ribs removed & shredded

25g butter

1 large onion - chopped

2 large potatoes - peeled and diced into 1 cm cubes

1 clove garlic - crushed

2 tbs chopped parsley

1 litre vegetable stock

Salt and black pepper

150ml crème fraiche

Wash the sorrel well and then transfer to a large pan and cook over a gentle heat until tender. No extra water need be added, just that which is clinging to the leaves after they have been washed.

Drain well in a colander.

Dry the pan and melt the butter.

Cook the onion and garlic over a medium to low heat until just soft but not brown.

Add the potatoes and parsley and cook a further 10 minutes.

Stir in the stock with a little salt and black pepper to taste, and simmer for 15 minutes.

Add the sorrel leaves and cook for a further 5 minutes.

Remove from the heat and when the soup has cooled a little, blend or liquidise until smooth.

Return to the pan and stir through the crème fraiche, reheat but do not allow to boil.

This is lovely with crusty bread, or for a more filling lunch try it with our Rosemary and Cheese Scone Roulade (under 'Herby Home Baking' in our recipe section).