



Backyard Garden
Guide Featuring
Native Plants
And Recipes

by Mary Loan
for
Pro-organic Belize

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...A simple guide to growing easy-to-grow native plants featuring:

- Chaya
- Coco Yam
- Prickly Pear
- Squash
- Sorrel
- Flowers
- Moringa



Chaya

Chaya is a versatile green vegetable that is very nutritious and easy to grow.

To grow: Find a sunny spot, weed, turn the area with a spade or shovel to loosen soil to at least 12 inches deep. Cut a few sticks of chaya at least 12 inches long. Plant 6 inches deep and water well each day until leaves sprout from sticks. Then, water about once a week if there is no rain. Plants will grow tall unless you cut the tops before they get taller than you can reach.

Recipe:

Pick a handful of chaya leaves, rinse and dry them. (Be careful as some are allergic to the sap. If so, wear gloves.) Cut the leaves into ½ inch slices with a knife. Leaves can be steamed, stir-fried, added to soups, parboiled or added to smoothie drinks.



Coco Yam

Coco yams are tubers with beautiful leaves.

To grow: Find a partially sunny, well-drained spot in your yard. Turn the area with a spade or shovel to about 6 inches deep. Find a small sprouting coco yam or plant $\frac{1}{2}$ corm from the market about 2 inches beneath the earth. Water well until the leaves are developed. Harvest when leaves are dried up.

Recipe:

Scrub tubers, then peel. Use as you would potatoes – fried, mashed, or in soups. They are kind of boring and dry when cooked plain, so add seasoning, broth, or gravy.



Prickly Pear (also known as Nopal)

Prickly Pear is a fun and easy to grow cactus. The pads are edible and slippery inside.

To grow: Find a sunny spot in your yard or garden. Dig up the space. Cut a pad from a cactus and plant the whole pad covering with soil, and water. You will be amazed to watch it grow rapidly up to 12 feet tall.

Recipe:

It is best to use the tender young pads for culinary use. Chop off the ends and scrape off any spines. Wash and slice into small slices, fry with onions and other veggies, rice, or even spaghetti sauce.

The fruits from prickly pear can be eaten raw, added to juices or smoothies, or made into jelly or jam.

Squash (or Pumpkin)

There are many varieties of squash. Save the seeds from your favorites.

To grow: Dig up an area 12 inches by 12 inches and make a small hill with the soil. Poke 4 to 5 holes around the hill and plant the seeds about $\frac{1}{4}$ inch deep. Water gently and regularly. Weed until plants are established and flowering. In about 3 to 4 months, harvest your squash.

Recipe:

Squash can be boiled, baked, scraped into salads and cooked with other veggies in casseroles, stir-fried recipes, etc. The seeds are edible too. Wash the seeds, soak in salted water, drain, then roast on a comal or in the oven until the seeds pop and snap.



Sorrel

Sorrel is a member of the hibiscus family. It grows to be about 6 feet tall. Sorrel produces calyxes which are used as a fruit to make beverages, chutney, jelly or jam.

To grow: Take seeds out of dried calyxes. Dig up an area about 2 feet by 6 feet. Plant seeds and cover with approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of soil. Water, mulch and weed.

Recipe:

Place about 12 fresh or 6 dried sorrel calyxes in one quart of water. Bring to a boil, then simmer for about 15-20 minutes. Strain, then add about $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar and stir. Enjoy hot or cold. The leaves can be finely diced and added to salads or stir fry dishes.



Flowers

Flowers beautify your home and garden. Four o'clocks, marigolds and zinnias are easy to grow.

To grow: Find a sunny border spot in your yard. Weed and dig up the area at least 3 inches deep. Sprinkle seeds and cover with soil. Be sure to water regularly and save seeds to share. Marigolds help keep pesky insects out of your garden.

Moringa

Moringa is a tree with leafy branches. The leaves and pods are very nutritious.

To grow: Plant seeds in pots or bags of soil. Water until plants are about 2 feet tall. Then, plant in sunny location. Or, cut a limb from a tree at least as wide as your index finger and about 16 inches long. Dig a hole about 12 inches deep and plant the stick about 10 inches down. Water regularly but do not soak. Be sure to prune tree or it will grow very tall and become a challenge to harvest the leaves.

Recipe:

Pull leaves from branch, sprinkle on hot rice or salads. To make tea, add about 1 cup fresh or ½ dried moringa leaves to one quart of water,

bring to a boil. Turn off heat and let sit for about 15 minutes. Serve hot or cold.



Pro-Organic Belize supports all farmers in Belize committed to growing organic produce under Participatory Guarantee System Standards, and education of farmers, vendors, consumers and the public. All decisions, actions and communications pertaining to and concerning the organization will reflect POB's mission.

Meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month at Maya Mountain Lodge in Santa Elena, Cayo, starting at 11 am. Lunch at noon. Guest speaker 1:15 pm
– All welcome.

Please call 620-9017 or 677-9658 for more info. Join us on facebook. Membership is \$25. per year

POB welcomes you to join our Pesticide-free Produce Co-op.

Delivery to San Ignacio and Belmopan every Thursday.

Please call 674-1919 or 620-9017 to sign-up. proorganicbelize@gmail.com



Compost

Millions of tons of food waste from schools, prisons, hospitals, restaurants and homes ends up in landfills and dumps. Food waste releases methane – a powerful greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming. Converting food waste to compost contributes to helping preserve the natural resources of our planet and building healthy soil.

What you can do to help:

Start a compost pile in our yard. Add fruit and veggie peelings and scraps along with eggshells and coffee grounds. Use grass clippings and dried leaves in between layers. Turn pile periodically and use composted soil to grow healthy plants.



Aloe Vera

Every Household will benefit from having aloe vera in the garden. Aloe Vera is a succulent plant that thrives in tropical climates.

To grow: Find a sunny or partly sunny spot in the garden