



Summer season vegetable list for South Florida

By Vava Antar Pragya, Miami-Dade County Master Gardener

Edible perennials / leafy greens :

Okinawan (Okinawa) spinach - *Gynura bicolor*

Longevity spinach - *Gynura procumbens*

Surinam (Suriname) spinach - *Talinum fruticosum*

Malabar spinach - *Basella alba*

Sissoo (Brazilian) spinach - *Alternanthera sissoo*

New Zealand spinach - *Tetragonia tetragonoides*

Egyptian spinach - *Corchorus olitorius*

Ethiopian kale – *Brassica carinata*

Katuk - *Sauropus androgynus* (bush leaves, flowers and berries)

Moringa - *Moringa oleifera* (tree leaves).

High in plant protein, katuk and moringa grow year-round in South Florida and can be eaten raw in salads, cooked in soups and curries or added to a smoothie.

Gourds/squashes/pumpkins:

Seminole pumpkin

Cassabanana

Chayote

Cucuzzi squash

Snake gourd is eaten immature as a vegetable much like the Summer squash; the mature fruit pulp can be used as off-season tomato substitute.

Bottle gourd is another very neutral-tasting vegetable that can be cooked like zucchini when young.

Loofa gourd can be eaten as zucchini when young (unripe fruit). Ripe fruit is used as natural sponge/scrubber for body and dish washing.

Bitter gourds - strong producers, highly medicinal and taste great if you are into bitter foods.

Ivy gourd, or **tindora** – perennial, tastes like a mix between a cucumber and a zucchini; easiest to propagate by cuttings from a known producer (plant is dioecious).

Make sure you collect fallen fruit of gourds, or they will reseed.

Herbs

Cuban oregano - *Plectranthus amboinicus*

Indian Coleus - *Plectranthus barbatus*

Culantro (*Eryngium foetidum*) - a great substitute for cilantro with a very similar flavor, culantro takes Summer heat (unlike cilantro). Grows perennially in South Florida.

Epazote - *Dysphania ambrosioides* - a medicinal and culinary herb with very peculiar taste; if cooked with beans, makes the beans more digestible (less gas-producing). Self seeds prolifically and grows even in poorest soils.

Shallot – *Allium cepa* – can be planted in Spring and harvested through Summer, doesn't mind hot weather unlike onions. <https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/mv133>

Society garlic – *Tulbaghia violacea* – perennial, milder flavor than regular garlic.

Root Vegetables & rhizomatous herbs - most of these vegetables can be successfully grown from grocery store-bought starts and don't require any special growing conditions.

Turmeric, ginger, and bulbous plants have been dormant in Winter are starting to wake up just about now. This is the best time to start growing them, you could easily find turmeric and ginger rhizomes in a grocery store - if they have viable buds, they will grow in your garden.

Sunchokes, or Jerusalem artichokes could become invasive in the North but are pretty “polite” growers in South Florida. They mature fast and deliver a lot of tubers. They are sunflower relatives and prefer full sun. Harvest them quickly after the stems die out because slugs and pill bugs love them, too. The tubers have to be moist and refrigerated after harvesting.

Sweet potatoes can be grown all summer long in South Florida. They are grown from “slips” - shoots that grow out of a tuber, just like “eyes” of a regular potato. Plant them as attractive groundcover. Young shoots are also edible and can be eaten as a leafy vegetable.

Yams - the taste is clean, crisp and neutral, with a hint of sweetness. Yams grow as a perennial vine here, seeds are toxic but roots are perfectly edible.

African Potato Mint - *Plectranthus rotundifolius* (produces edible tubers)- This less known variety of “root vegetable” surprisingly belongs to the mint family. An important crop vegetable in African countries, it is just starting to gain popularity in Florida. It grows carefree and thrives through our hot Summer months.

Colocasia (Taro) and Xanthosoma (malanga) - Should be grown in shade and kept moist preferably all the time. Do not buy ornamental colocasias for food - many colocasias and alocasias are not edible. Try to grow taro or malanga from a tuber purchased at a grocery store, look for viable buds while choosing planting material.

Hot peppers / Chili peppers – April-May is the time to start planting peppers - they need high temperatures and don't mind even the hottest months.

Tomatoes (Everglades - red and yellow varieties) - Though tomato season in South Florida is over, there is a native variety that lives through hot and humid Summer and can produce despite hot weather (regular tomatoes have a very narrow window of productive temperatures). It's called Everglades tomato, with a red and a yellow variety. The yellow one is much sweeter, both have very similar indeterminate growth pattern and can be grown as a vine (staked) or as groundcover (unstaked).

Last updated: May 2020