



Herbal Garden (Muligai Vanam)



Malabar Spinach

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Botanical Name	:	<i>Basella alba</i> L.
Tamil Name	:	Kodi Pasalai
Sanskrit Name	:	Upodika
English Name	:	

Distribution and Habitat:

Basella alba (L.) is an extremely heat tolerant, fast growing perennial vine which belongs to family Basellaceae. It is commonly known as Malabar spinach, Ceylon spinach, vine spinach, climbing spinach. It is native to tropical Southern Asia. It is particularly abundant in Malaysia, Philippines, tropical Africa, tropical America, southeast of Brazil.



The plant is a perennial twining herb. Stem fleshy, 8-10 m, stout at the base with slender upper branches. Leaves axillary, 5-12 cm long, dark green, broadly ovate, acute. Flowers subsessile, white pink or red. Fruit black or dark purple, enclosed with persistent fleshy calyx. Seeds black, globose.

Parts used: Tender leaves and stems.

Phyto-chemical constituents

Carotenoids, basellasaponins, phenolic compounds, flavonoids, ascorbic acid, betacyanins, organic acids, Vitamin A, C B5 and B9, essential amino acids, minerals.

Uses

The mucilaginous qualities of the plant make it an excellent thickening agent in soups, stews, etc. The purplish sap from fruits is used as a colouring agent in pastries and sweets.

Medicinal uses

Fresh leaves are more nutritious than cooked leaves. The water becomes viscous when the leaves are soaked. It is applied on the forehead to induce sleep. The leaf juice is mixed with sugar candy and used to ease phlegm and cold. It is a good laxative and cures urinary infections. The leaf is a coolant and useful for pregnant women to prevent constipation (Sudhakar, 2007). The paste of root along with rice washed water is taken in the morning in empty stomach for one month to cure irregular periods by the rural people of Orissa. The plant has been reported for its antifungal, anticonvulsant,



and analgesic, anti-inflammatory and for the treatment of anaemia. Leaf-juice mixed with butter, is soothing and cooling when applied to burns and scalds (Shruthi et al. 2012). The Ayurvedic treatment in India has been using the leaves and stem for anti-cancer such as melanoma, leukaemia and oral cancer. The plant has been used from a long time back for the treatment of many diseases like dysentery, diarrhoea, anaemia, cancer etc. Daily consumption of the *B. alba* has a positive effect on total-body vitamin A and folic acid.

Photo link: <https://www.trianglegardener.com/malabar-spinach-easy-edible-and-elegant/>

