
Tropical Lettuce

Dr. Frank Martin gave us our initial start on a tropical lettuce, *Latuca indica*, also called Indian lettuce. This has grown well in both the hot, wet summer and the colder winter of southern Florida. During the summer it grows to about 8 feet high. Winter size is about half that. The rather large leaves can be eaten raw or cooked. According to Dr. Martin's book *Edible Leaves of the Tropics*, it is commonly grown in the Orient, mainly cooked as greens, but can be eaten raw. We have found it to be quite disease and insect resistant. It is more bitter than the popular lettuces of temperate regions, though after the first bite the bitterness is little noticed. After cooking or when served with vinegar the bitterness is not present. Some local friends have become quite excited about it. Bonnie and I use it as a lettuce only when the weather is too hot for regular lettuce. But it fills a real void during those hot periods. It is good cooked by itself or mixed with other edible leaves at any time. If you are in a region where lettuce does not grow well, write for a free packet of seed. We will be interested to see how it does in different areas. It might even be a good lettuce for a rain forest.

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