

March 2020

Asian Vegetables & Herbs Easy to Grow in Southern California

| Name | Planting time | Need support | Pot ok | Comments |
|---|-------------------|--------------|--------|---|
| Legumes | | | | |
| Snow Peas (<i>Pisum sativum</i> , var. <i>macrocarpon</i>) | Cool Spr/Fall | y/n | y | Bush and pole varieties |
| Pea shoots – various | Spr/Fall | y | y | Pick young, not tendrils |
| Soya Bean (<i>Glycine max</i>) | Spr | n | n | Pull up plant for dried |
| Yard Long Bean (<i>Vigna unguiculata</i> ssp. <i>Sesquipedalis</i>) | Warm spr | y | y | Long harvest, keep picked |
| Lab Lab Beans (<i>Lab Lab purpureus</i> , <i>Dolichos lab lab</i>), Hyacinth Bean | Warm spr, summer | y/n | n | Can be a perennial if no frost. Contains cyanogenic glycosides, eat young or boil mature beans. |
| Winged Bean/Pea (<i>Tetragonolobus purpureus</i>) | Cool | n | y | Fast maturing, pretty |
| Brassicas, Headed | | | | |
| Chinese cabbage, Napa cabbage (<i>Brassica rapa</i> var. <i>pekinensis</i>) | Late summer, fall | n | n | Fresh – mild sweet flavor, sev. cultivars |
| Pak choi/ Bok choy (<i>Brassica rapa</i> var. <i>chinensis</i>), celery cabbage | Spring | n | y | Fast-grower, good for inter-cropping, harvest whole or lvs |
| Rosette pak choi (<i>Brassica chinensis</i> var. <i>narinosa</i>), 'Tatsoi', 'Taisai' | Mid summer, fall | n | y | Neat, compact, harvest leaves or whole |
| Flowering Stalk Brassicas | | | | |
| Chinese broccoli (<i>Brassica oleracea</i> var. <i>alboglabra</i>) 'Gai lan' | Late spr-fall | n | n | Young flowering stems and buds |
| Komatsuna (<i>Brassica rapa</i> var. <i>komatsuna</i>) Mustard spinach | Late spr-fall | n | n | Flavor bet. cabbage and mustard; eat whole or leaves |
| Mustard Greens | | | | |
| Mizuna (<i>Brassica rapa</i> var. <i>japonica</i>), green, red varieties | Fall-spring | n | y | Mild flavored, pretty, pick leaves |
| Japanese Giant Red Mustard (<i>Brassica juncea</i>), Osaka Purple Mustard (<i>B. juncea</i> var. <i>rugosa</i>) | Fall-Spring | n | y/n | Gorgeous, very spicy-hot raw, but mild cooked |
| Not Spinaches | | | | |
| Chinese spinach (<i>Amaranthus tricolor</i> , <i>A. caudatus</i> , <i>A. hypochondriacus</i>) | Spring-summer | n | y | Tolerates hot, dry conditions; can eat leaves & seeds |

| | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-----|---------|---|
| New Zealand Spinach (<i>Tetragonia tetragonoides</i>) | Spring-summer | n | y | Young fresh leaves best. Rich in vit. C, discovered by Capt. Cook ca. 1770 |
| Malabar Spinach (<i>Basella alba</i> , <i>B. rubra</i>) white, red berries/stems. | Spring-summer | y | n | Young leaves best; mucilaginous; berries used for dyes |
| Cucurbits (melons, cucumbers, pumpkins) | | | | |
| Bitter Melon (<i>Momordica charantia</i>), 'Goya' | Warm-spring-summer | y | y | Sprawling vine, grow for food and shade. Likes warm, humid. Bitter taste, quinine, medicinal use. |
| Japanese/Chinese Cucumber (<i>Cucumis sativus</i>), 'Burpless cucumber' | Warm – spring-summer | y | n | Keep picked for heavy harvest; skin often prickly; sweet, crisp |
| Kabocha Japanese Pumpkin (<i>Cucurbita moschata</i> and <i>C. maxima</i>), 'Kabocha', 'Chirimen', 'Kuri'; hybrid 'Delica' common | Spring-summer | y/n | n | Needs space, can use trellis. Sweet, chestnut like texture, skin edible. |
| Solanums | | | | |
| Shishito Pepper (<i>Capsicum annuum</i>) | Spr-summer | n | y | Tasty pepper, good grilled; 1 out of 8 very hot |
| Japanese, Chinese Eggplant (<i>Solanum melongena</i>) | Spr-summer | n | y | Slender fruit, tender skin, prolific producer |
| Tubers & Roots | | | | |
| Japanese Sweet Potatoes: 'Murasaki' or 'Satsuma' varieties. (<i>Ipomoea batatas</i> , Convolvulaceae) | Spr-summer | y | y large | Start with slips; texture reminds of chestnut, excellent flavor |
| Sato Imo (<i>Colocasia esculenta</i> var. <i>antiquorum</i> , Araceae); also 'Taro' or 'Kalo' in Hawaii; greens – 'Dasheen' | Spr-summer | n | y large | New world crop, but ancient cultivation in Japan; has calcium oxalates, needs cooking |
| Daikon radish (<i>Raphanus sativus</i> var. <i>longipinnatus</i>), Brassicaceae | Fall-spring | n | y large | v. long, drilling root; leaves edible, pickled |
| Japanese turnip – Hinona kabu (9-12" long), Kobaku, small, white, round (2-6" dia.) (<i>Brassica rapa</i> var. <i>rapifera</i>) | Spr, late summer, autumn | n | y | Sweet, mild taste, creamy texture |
| Gobo (<i>Arctium lappa</i> , Compositae), Burdock | Spring, autumn | n | y large | Grow in loose, sandy soil, very long root (to 4'); tasty, nutritious |
| Herbs | | | | |
| Thai Basil (<i>Ocimum basilicum</i> var. <i>thrysiflora</i>), 'licorice basil', 'cinnamon basil' | Spring-summer | n | y large | Popular cultivar, 'Siam Queen' |
| Chinese Parsley, Cilantro (<i>Coriandrum sativum</i>) | Late summer, to spring | n | y | Prefers sunny to semi-shade, warm, not hot temp, regular moisture. Self-sows |
| Shiso (red, green) (<i>Perilla frutescens</i>) | Spring | n | y/n | Self-sows. Semi-sun, moist soil, can take clay soils. |
| Shungiku (<i>Chrysanthemum coronaria</i>), edible chrysanthemum, garland chrysanthemum | Spring-fall | n | y | Unique flavor, long harvest, edible leaves and flower petals |

| | | | | |
|--|---------------|---|---|--|
| Mitsuba (<i>Cryptotaenia japonica</i>), 'Japanese honewort', Japanese wild chervil, wild parsley | Fall – spring | n | y | Unique blend of parsley, celery, angelica flavor; can be hardy perennial in woodland setting |
| Lemon Grass (<i>Cymbopogo citratus</i>), sev. spp. | Spr-summer | N | Y | Pull stalk at base, likes warm temps. |
| Japanese bunching onions (<i>Allium fistulosum</i>), aka Welsh onions, scallions | Spr/ fall | N | Y | Can harvest year round; often multiplies |

BOOKS & SEED/PLANT SOURCES

Harrington, Geri. 1978. *Grow Your Own Chinese Vegetables*. Garden Way Publishing Inc.

Larkom, Joy. 2008. *Oriental Vegetables*. Kodansha America, Ltd., Japan and Kodansha America, Inc., New York.

Schneider, Elizabeth. 1998. *Uncommon Fruits and Vegetables*. William Morrow Cookbooks.

Kitazawa Seed Company (www.kitazawaseed.com) . Oldest seed company specializing in Asian vegetables in America, founded in 1917, Oakland, CA. Carries over 25 varieties of traditional and heirloom seeds of Japan, China, Korea. Provides some growing and cooking information.

Territorial Seed Company (www.territorialseed.com). Based in Cottage Grove, OR. Tells you who bred the seeds. Seeds sold by weight, e.g. 5 grams for \$3.05 (spinach); ½ gram \$2.25 (broccoli).

Renee's Garden Seeds (www.reneesgarden.com). Based in Felton, CA. Sells heirlooms and hybrids. No printed catalog, seeds available in many garden centers. Website also has gardening articles. Sells seeds from growers around the world. RG says they are organic, non GMO. Seed packet information also available on website – convenient. RG also donates seeds to organizations and educational programs.

Rareseeds.com <https://www.rareseeds.com/store/vegetables> is the online store of Baker Creek Seeds, original store in Missouri, also now in Petaluma, CA. The family is a major sponsor of the Heirloom Expo in Santa Rosa, CA.

Vegetable starts (e.g. shishito pepper, suyo eggplant, Japanese/Chinese eggplant, cucumbers, Japanese tomatoes, Chinese brassicas) are available at various local stores: Yamaguchi Nursery, Nijiya Market (both on Sawtelle Blvd, W LA) and Anzen Hardware, 309 E. 1st St., Little Tokyo, Los Angeles.

Fruit trees (all useful for small gardens, as patio trees, etc.):

Persimmon. (*Diospyros kaki*) Oriental persimmon or *kaki*, *Diospyros kaki* ('Kaki' and 'Hachiya' varieties),^[1] is the most widely cultivated species of the genus *Diospyros*. The *kaki* is among the oldest cultivated plants, having been in use in China for more than 2000 years. In some rural Chinese communities, the *kaki* fruit is seen as having a great mystical power that can be harnessed to cure headaches, back pains and foot ache.

The **persimmon** is an edible sweet fruit with a soft to occasionally fibrous texture. Variety 'kaki' is edible while firm, has a smooth, firm texture; 'hachiya' must become very ripe or it is astringent. *Kaki* is **deciduous**, with ovate, broad, stiff leaves which turn a beautiful orange color in the fall. Cultivation extended to other parts of East **Asia**, including **Japan** where it is very popular. It was later introduced to **California** and Brazil in the 1890s by Japanese immigrants.

Jujube *Ziziphus jujube*, commonly called **jujube**, **red date**, **Chinese date**,^[3] is a species of *Ziziphus* in the **buckthorn family (Rhamnaceae)**. The tree or shrub may have spines on the branches. The fruit begins green, then golden yellow with red streaks, finally deep mahogany reddish brown. Deciduous.

Loquat The **loquat**, *Eriobotrya japonica*, is an evergreen **species of flowering plant** in the **family Rosaceae**, a **native** to the cooler hill regions of south-central **China**. It is also commonly found in Japan, Korea, northern parts of the Philippines, in India, and **Pakistan**, and hilly regions in **Sri Lanka**. It is a large **evergreen shrub or tree**, grown commercially for its yellow fruit, and also cultivated as an **ornamental plant**.

Kumquat (*Citrus japonica*) are a group of small **fruit-bearing trees** in the **flowering plant** family **Rutaceae**. Small, oblong shaped, with a thin orange colored rind, it has an unusual taste combination. Some varieties have a sweet rind and tart flesh, other varieties are reversed.

Yuzu (*Citrus junos*,) from Japanese ユズ or 柚子) is a **citrus fruit** and plant in the family **Rutaceae**. It is believed to have originated in central China as a **hybrid** of **mandarin orange** and the **ichang papeda**. Highly prized sweet-tart citrus used for salad dressing and dipping sauce in Japan.

Tangerine/Mikan (*Citrus unshiu*) is a seedless and easy-peeling **citrus** species, also known as unshu mikan,^[1] cold hardy mandarin,^[2] satsuma mandarin,^[2] satsuma orange, naartjie,^[2] and tangerine.^[2] It is of Chinese origin, named after **Unsyu (Wenzhou)**, China, but introduced to the West via Japan