

## Sissoo or Brazilian Spinach - *Alternanthera sissoo*



Sissoo is at the top of the list of the many “favorites” in the edible landscape. Besides being very nutritious, it is easy to grow, does not seem to be attractive to iguanas and tastes good cooked and raw. Also known as poor man’s spinach and samba lettuce...the leaves are bright green and purely crunchy without any slimy texture.

Brazilian spinach is typically used as a “plantas alimentícias não convencionais” (non-conventional food plant) in South America offering a range of nutritional benefits similar to conventional spinach. It’s has many phytonutrients such as antioxidants and carotenoids that promote eye health. Rich in vitamins A and C, folic acid, iron and calcium it also contains vitamins B, E, K, potassium and is low in fat.

The mildly flavored, crinkly leaves are versatile in salads, stir-fries, and soups. Reportedly, Brazilians eat this plant raw in salads with oil, vinegar, tomato, and onion, although some reports recommend cooking it. It is eaten alone as a cooked green or added to dishes as a local spinach substitute.

Sissoo is a beautiful plant that prefers 50% or more shade and tolerates a wide range of soil conditions but needs a high amount of nitrogen, organic matter and water. Coffee grounds and compost once in a while keep it happy. Grow this spinach in your food forest as a vigorous edible ground cover, in pots alone or as a decorative living mulch around other plants. It is not invasive because it doesn’t reseed, growing only about about 12 inches high.

Tender new growth is more suitable for raw consumption. Harvest tender greens often by cutting 6 to 12 inch growing tips. Pick off the leaves, wash and consume raw or cooked. Preserve a few leaves on top of the branch as it is easily propagated by putting denuded branches in water... within a week there will be roots and it’s ready to be planted in another pot..keep it in shade for a few days. Easy peasy, its ready to grow or give away... A tasty warrior for local food security.

**Health Note:** As many leafy greens can be high in oxalic acid you may have heard to beware of food high in oxalates. Besides nutrients, Sissoo has oxalate levels lower than conventional spinach.

If you have health issues, you should definitely consult with your doctor and/or nutritionist before deciding what is right for you

In any case, to reduce the oxalic acid content in all leafy greens simply blanch them before eating. Blanching can reduce oxalate content by up to 90%. Remember to discard the water afterward.

Please read our [Health Disclaimer](#) here



## **Penne Pasta Salad with Brazilian Spinach** - Submitted 05/20/25 by Rick Smith-

- 3/4 cup Penne pasta of choice
- 1 cup Brazilian Spinach, chopped
- 3/4 Tbsp. Red chile pepper (to taste) minced
- 3/4 Tbsp. Green onion, chopped
- 1 tsp. Garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. Dried rosemary, minced
- 1/4 tsp. Red chile pepper spice
- 1/4 tsp. maple pepper (or black pepper)
- 2 Tbsp. Olive oil
- salt to taste
- 1/4 cup. Walnuts, chopped (optional)

Boil pasta according to directions, drain and combine remaining ingredients, mix well, and enjoy chilled or room temp. Simple and delicious!

This is a versatile recipe that could be made a lot of ways by adding other ingredients, such as beet, tofu, chia seeds, parsley, cucumber, etc. You can't go wrong. Best of all, no matter how you make it, it's sure to be super healthy!



## **Twice-baked Potato with Brazilian Spinach** - Submitted 05/22/25 by Rick Smith

- 2 Baking potatoes, large
- 1 cup Brazilian Spinach, blanched & chopped
- 1 cup. Cheddar cheese, grated
- 1/4 cup Unsweetened almond milk
- 2 Tbsp. Vegan butter
- 1/2 Tbsp. Red chile pepper (to taste) minced
- 2 cloves Garlic (to taste) minced
- 1 tsp. Dried rosemary, minced
- 1/4 tsp. Red chile pepper spice
- 1/4 tsp. Maple pepper (or black pepper)
- salt to taste
- 1 Tbsp. Sour Cream
- Green onions or garlic chives chopped for garnish

To thoroughly clean potatoes, soak in water with 1 tsp. baking soda for 10 mins, scrub skins and rinse. Let dry. Perfect!

Brush potatoes with avocado oil and bake at 400 degrees F for 1-1/2 hrs. or until cooked through and softened. Let cool.

Hollow out potatoes leaving a shell, save potato. In a bowl mix potato with all ingredients except green onions. Use a hand mixer to mix the mash thoroughly until somewhat smooth and not too lumpy. Add additional almond milk if the mash appears too thick.

Stuff potato shells and top with additional cheese. Bake for 1/2 hour or until cheese is melted and slightly browned, and potatoes are warmed throughout. Top w/ sour cream and green onions.

