Published on *Kitchen Gardeners International* (http://kgi.org)



# P is for Purslane (Parties and Pictures)

Tue, 07/27/2010 - 12:04 -- Roger Doiron

Who decides what's for dinner in your house, you or your garden? I like to amuse myself by thinking that I call the shots, but at this time of the year in the Northern Hemisphere we all know who's boss. Some plants just won't be ignored. Zucchini will grow to the size of caveman clubs if left to their own devices. Slim, tender green beans will bulk up and toughen. And cherry tomatoes will burst like cherry bombs as if to say "Hey, don't forget me!"

What's true for dinner is also true for this newsletter. I had every intention of making garlic the main topic, but my garden had another plan. Just as I was putting the finishing touches on a new YouTube video about harvesting and curing garlic [1], I noticed that a large part of my backyard garden was on its way to becoming a field of purslane. Considered a delicacy in parts of Europe, Asia and Mexico, purslane has another reputation and name in much of the gardening world: an invasive weed.

To set the record straight, my purslane field didn't appear over night. We've had it in our garden in the past, but this year's warm temperatures are making this heat-loving annual succulent feel right at home.

As with other edible so-called weeds like dandelions, lamb's quarters, and stinging nettle, I'm taking a "if you can't beat 'em, eat 'em" approach to my purslane crop. I've read in a couple places that purslane was Gandhi's favorite food which sounds plausible if you think of his build. In reading a New York Times article from 2006, I discovered Gandhi wasn't alone:

"From Provence to Greece, Turkey to Kuala Lumpur, Mexico to Galilee, purslane is gathered in the wild and sold at local farmers' markets under many names. In Mexico, "verdolaga" is eaten with pork and tomatillos. Farmers in Provence sell "pourpier" in wild mesclun. In Greece, little old ladies forage from field to field hunting "glistrida", and in Turkey semizotu is mixed with garlicky yogurt and chopped into fetching salads with ripe tomatoes. In Galilee I was told that "regelah" was delicious in salads ? regelah being Hebrew for foot, since purslane is a plant typically found right at your feet. A Russian émigré shared a recipe for "portulak" in zesty potato salad. On a trip to Malaysia I found "gelang pasir" eaten raw, dipped into spicy fish-chili paste, or cut up into nasi ulam, a turmeric-tinted rice salad. Purslane makes Lebanon's classic tabbouleh and fattoush even zippier. In Sri Lanka it's stir-fried with chilies and fish, while "suberi-hiyu" is pickled in Japanese villages, to eat in the winter, alongside rice."

Based on all that you might be wondering how purslane could ever be considered a weed when much of the rest of world seems to be happily munching on it. Let just say that it's because it's not so much an acquired taste as an acquired texture. Its slightly lemony leaves and stems have a crunchy, yet slimy quality to them but not enough to be off-putting if you like a little adventure in your plate. They also happen to be rich in vitamins A and C and contain more Omega-3 fatty acids than any other leafy vegetable in case you need more convincing.

What I like most about purslane is that it's a useful crop that doesn't need to be planted so much as managed.

Left unattended, it can quickly take over a bed in an aggressive and very un-Gandhiesque way, so don't hesitate to pull them. A few plants are all you need for most uses. Between eating them and the physical activity of managing them, you'll be well on your way to achieving a svelte, Gandhiesque figure of your own.

Wishing you a great garden this season, weeds and all.

PS: As some of our regular newsletter readers will recall [2], I'm taking KGI on the road to Europe for the year (my family and I leave Saturday) so the next email updates will be coming from Belgium (Marche), France (Nimes), Germany (Berlin) and Italy (Turin), more or less in that order. Let me know [3] if, by chance, you're anywhere near those locations in case we might meet up.

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**Parties!**

August 22nd will mark the 7th annual celebration of World Kitchen Garden Day and it's already looking like it's going to be the biggest garden party we've ever coordinated. Over 850 people have already committed to recognizing the day in some way on Facebook[4]. Whether you're gardening on your own, with your family or as part of club or nonprofit group, I hope you'll celebrate the day and use it as occasion to teach at least one other person one new thing about growing and enjoying good food. Please use our event postings on Facebook[4], Evite[5] and Crusher[6] (depending on which platform you like or use more) to reach out to others. Thanks.

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**Pictures!** Last year, we ran a little campaign called "Crush Hunger" to underline the role that gardens and gardeners can play in improving global food security and to raise funds for our international partnership program. This year, we want to do it again and want to ask for your help. This time, however, we don't want to ask for your garden bucks (not yet at least), but for your garden boots (or, rather, a picture of them). Depending on what we can bring together for pictures, we'd like to put together a short video set to Nancy Sinatra's "These Boots are Made for Walking." So send us a picture of you and your boots (clogs, flipflops, barefeet or whatever footwear you like to wear while gardening) and tell us what you'd like to crush or "walk all over" with them (hunger, injustice, global warming, tasteless store-bought tomatoes, etc). The picture can be a self-portrait likes these or can be taken by someone else. The more diverse, creative and "gardeny" (in terms of background and props), the better. You can send your picture

by e-mail[7] or post them to our Flickr group[8] or Facebook page[9]. Thanks. Please use "kgibootsproject" as the tag. (Photo credits: norwichnuts, lism)

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