



A GUIDE TO PERENNIAL SALADS

SORELL

- Ruby Sorrel
- French Sorrel
- Lemon Sorrel

The name sorrel is used to describe several related plants. The name comes from the French for 'sour' (sœur), and it is true that the leaves, which are the edible part of the plant, have a sharp acidity. If you look online for the names of the different varieties you will quickly find that there is a degree of overlap, with some sites assigning different common names to different physical forms. The Abundant Borders website page

(<http://abundantborders.org.uk/we-love-sorrel/>) has more details

Common Sorrel (also known as Garden Sorrel, Narrow Leaved Dock and Spinach Dock) has large, narrow, bright-green, arrow-shaped leaves which have a smooth, crisp texture. The leaves can be eaten raw in salads, younger smaller leaves are the best, or cooked in soups, purées and stuffings and sorrel goes particularly well with fish and egg dishes.

French Sorrel has an even more citrus flavour and the leaves add a tang to salads.

Buckler leaf sorrel, which I know as **Lemon Sorrel**, has tiny, shield-shaped leaves that are good in a mixed green salad or as a garnish. Unsurprisingly, the leaves have a definite lemony taste. Red veined sorrel, which I know as **Ruby Sorrel** or Bloody Dock is the least acidic of the sorrels and is great in salads, adding colour as well as taste.

CHARD

Strictly speaking, the name of this plant is Swiss chard. It has large, deep-green leaves and thick, crisp stalks. Different types of chard have different coloured stalks and ribs – some are white, some are orange, and some are red (called ruby or rhubarb chard), and there's even rainbow chard. There is little difference in taste, but ruby chard can have a slightly stronger flavour.

GARLIC MUSTARD

Garlic mustard is a versatile and nutritious vegetable. All parts of the plant are edible. The root has a pungent, horseradish flavour, especially when mixed with white vinegar. The leaves are heart-shaped, smooth and hairless and, when crushed, they smell of garlic. Leaves taken from plants growing in the shade are much less bitter than those taken from plants

growing in full sun, so if adding to salad, take the shaded leaves if you can. The young leaves, picked before the flowers appear, make great pesto.

SAGE

Sage is a strongly-scented herb that can be used to flavour vegetable or meat dishes. Fresh or dried leaves can be used to make teas. Sage loves a warm, sunny and sheltered spot - and is attractive enough to be grown alongside other ornamental plants. It is an evergreen shrub so the leaves can be picked at any time for adding fresh to dishes.

LEMON BALM

Lemon Balm is a member of the mint family, and like mint, the leaves make a delicious herbal tea, which is believed to possess anti-inflammatory, antibacterial and antiseptic properties. It is also used to combat stress and anxiety as well as help with indigestion. The young, sweet leaves make a tangy addition to spring salads.

Lemon Balm is a vigorous plant which likes to spread itself about and can grow up to two feet high, so you do have to keep your eye on it, but the bees love it.

MINT

Mint is grown for its leaves, which are wonderful infused in hot water to make a refreshing tea, chopped in salads and added to many dishes, or used to make mint sauce. The plant dies back completely overwinter, so make the most of the young leaves in spring and summer. There are many different varieties of mint to choose from with leaves that smell completely different. Not all are good for culinary use, so choose what you grow carefully. We recommend:

- **Peppermint**
- **Ginger Mint**
- **Chocolate Mint**

COMFREY FLOWERS

We grow Comfrey in the garden to use the leaves in compost or to make liquid plant feed. Comfrey used to be known as “knit-bone” due to its supposed healing properties. However today eating or taking any form of comfrey isn’t recommended. It is considered unsafe, due to the pyrrolizidine alkaloids that it contains. However, the flowers can be eaten and make an attractive addition to a salad.

CHIVES

Chives are just about the easiest herb to grow in the garden. They are a delicious addition to salads with a taste milder than onions. They also produce attractive pinky-purple flowers which are also edible and are an attractive salad garnish. The flowers also attract bees and butterflies.

SALAD BURNETT

Salad Burnett, also called Garden Burnet, Small Burnet or simply just Burnet, is a low-growing plant with attractive leaves, which smell of cucumber if crushed or walked on. Unsurprisingly, the leaves also taste, mildly, of cucumber and can be added to salads throughout the summer months.

WILD GARLIC

This plant is known by many, many different names – Bear Leek, Bear's Garlic, Broad-leaved Garlic, Buckrams, Ramsons and Wood Garlic. The plant disappears underground overwinter and appears for a short time in spring and early summer, so make the most of it while it lasts. The leaves and the flowers are edible. Young leaves are delicious added to soups, sauces and to turn into pesto.

ANGELICA

Angelica is best known as crystallised or candied strips used as a decoration on cakes and desserts, but angelica itself is a member of the parsley family. It is a tall plant with a long firm stem and bright green leaves. The stems can be cooked with rhubarb or apple for pies or crumbles, as an alternative to adding sugar. The leaves don't have much taste but the lovely shape and deep green colour make it a useful salad ingredient, particularly in the early spring and summer before lettuces are ready to eat.

OREGANO

Oregano is grown for its use in pasta and tomato dishes but the leaves can be put directly into salads too

SWEET CICELY

Sweet Cicely is a tall herbaceous perennial plant which can grow up to 2m tall, though more likely to be around a metre tall. The leaves look like fern or bracken leaves and they smell – and taste – of aniseed. All parts of the plant are edible, leaves, seeds and roots. In the past sweet cicely was cultivated as a salad and medicinal herb, but now it isn't commonly grown in most modern herb gardens – but it should be!

The leaves can be cooked like spinach, fresh leaves taste terrific added to salads, soups or omelettes. The stalks can be used like celery, and the roots can be boiled, eaten raw or made into wine. In addition, the lovely white flowers are rich in nectar and highly valuable to bees and other beneficial insects.

LADY'S MANTLE

We grow Lady's Mantle as a ground cover plant as it is fast spreading but also easy to remove if the ground is needed for other crops. The leaves are an attractive scallop shape and the young leaves make a tasty, attractive addition to salads. The older leaves tend to get a bit tough and hairy, so it is best enjoyed in spring and early summer.

CALENDULA FLOWERS

These lovely orange or yellow flowers can be added to salads, preferably with the petals separated from the stem, to add a splash of colour.

LOVAGE

Lovage is a tall perennial plant. It disappears over winter and comes back in the early spring, so is one of the first salad leaves to appear in the garden. It has been long cultivated in Europe, the leaves being used as a herb, the roots as a vegetable, and the seeds as a spice, especially in southern European cuisine. The leaves have a strong taste, a bit like parsley, aniseed and celery combined, so best added in small amounts to salads and to stick with the young, tender leaves.

You can peel the tap roots and use them in stews or cook them as you would salsify. When the seeds start to turn brown, you can use them instead of celery seeds.

SPINACH BEET

Spinach Beet is also known as Perpetual Spinach. It is hardy and will give a crop over winter, so it is a must for any edible garden. And the leaves can be used in the same way as “true” spinach, in salads, pesto, soups and stews. It has long been valued as a plant that can restore energy levels, increase vitality and improve the quality of the blood.

It is rich in iron, which plays a central role in the function of red blood cells which transport oxygen around the body. Spinach is also an excellent source of vitamin K, vitamin A, vitamin C and folate as well as being a good source of manganese, magnesium, iron and vitamin B2. Vitamin K is important for maintaining bone health and it is difficult to find vegetables richer in vitamin K than spinach.

GROUND ELDER

This is an unusual leaf to be suggesting in a salad, but the leaves are edible! The Romans used it as a salad vegetable, and they may have introduced the plant to the UK. It was used as a medicinal herb in the Middle Ages to cure gout - hence the alternative name of goutweed. The leaves have a nutty flavour when eaten raw in salads, and they can be cooked in butter like spinach. Do not plant ground elder in the garden as it is horribly invasive, but since most gardens already have it – why not eat it.

THYME

Thyme is a lovely, fragrant herb that is grown mainly to use in soups and stews. However the lovely little leaves, and flowers, can be added straight into a salad to add a bit of a zing.



**IF YOU ARE FORAGING FOR THESE PLANTS PLEASE TAKE NOTE
IF YOU ARE NOT SURE YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED THE PLANT CORRECTLY, DO NOT EAT IT
DON'T EAT PLANTS IF YOU THINK THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN SPRAYED WITH PESTICIDE**