

Sorrel, Garden—*Rumex acetosa* L.¹

James M. Stephens²

Garden or common sorrel is a close relative of rhubarb. Sometimes it is referred to as dock. However, the term “dock” has been used in Britain to include all members of the family Polygonaceae. Owing to its tart flavor, it is sometimes called sour dock and sour grass. In fact, sorrel derives from *surele*, which is French for “sour.”

Description and Use

Garden sorrel is a perennial plant with long, pointed, reddish green leaves that are sometimes eaten as a potherb and in a salad. It resembles curly dock, a common weed found in Florida and elsewhere. Both types have a many seeded central flowering stalk surrounded by wavy, pointed, slender leaves. The root persists season after season, but is not used as a vegetable.

Culture

Sorrel has been grown successfully in Florida gardens. Sow seeds in the fall and spring. Then thin plants to a spacing of 6 to 8 inches apart in rows spaced 2 feet apart. Established plants may be divided and the divisions reset to increase the planting. Soil preparation and plant care are similar to those for most other vegetables. While the whole plant may be harvested at once, the usual method is to remove leaves one at a time as needed.



Figure 1. Sorrel.
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