**What Is Purslane?**

Purslane, also known as common purslane, little hogweed, pigweed, fatweed, or pusle, is found worldwide. In the U.S., it's often considered a nuisance. But in other parts of the globe, it's regularly eaten at meals or used as medicine. In Mexico, it's called *verdolaga*and is included in recipes*.* In Chinese folklore, purslane is known as a "vegetable for long life."

Because it's a succulent (a plant that can retain water), purslane thrives in climates that can't sustain a lot of other plants. Its sturdy nature makes it a great option for very dry, hot regions or for gardeners who don’t trust themselves to water regularly. This easily overlooked plant also provides a surprising number of health benefits. But you'll probably have to grow it yourself if you want to reap its nutritional rewards.

## Purslane Benefits

You might not guess from looking at its tiny yellow flowers or rubbery green leaves, but purslane is listed by the World Health Organization as one of the most used medicinal plants in the world. That's because this low-growing plant is:

**Loaded with antioxidants**

Free radicals are unstable molecules in your body that cause cell damage. Antioxidants are special compounds found in plants and plant-based foods that fight against them. Purslane contains plenty of antioxidants, such as:

* [**Vitamin A:**](https://www.webmd.com/vitamins/ai/ingredientmono-964/vitamin-a) It protects your eyes as well as improves your immune system. It's also critical to the health of your organs because it supports healthy cell division.
* **Beta-carotene:** It turns into vitamin A in your body. Its ability to reduce the number of free radicals in your body can help reduce your risk of cancer.
* [**Vitamin C:**](https://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-guides/understanding-anemia-basics#1)It keeps your collagen and blood vessels in good shape, and helps heal injuries**.**
* **Glutathione:**It has anti-cancer properties. Purslane leaves contain more glutathione than spinach.
* **Melatonin:**It not only helps improve your sleep but also reduces inflammation, helps manage your immune system, and is good for your blood pressure.
* **Betalain:** Although more studies need to be done, the natural substance that gives purslane stems their reddish color appears to have antiviral, antibacterial, and antifungal qualities.

**Lower risk of**[**cancer**](https://www.webmd.com/cancer/default.htm)

* Purslane contains several compounds that have been linked to anti-cancer activity. Among them are flavonoids, alkaloids, and polysaccharides, a type of natural carbohydrate. Early studies also show that some of these potent ingredients could one day end up being used to treat cancer. But much more research needs to be done.

[**Heart health**](https://www.webmd.com/heart/default.htm)

* Omega-3 fatty acids are found in fish, not usually in plants. Purslane is an exception. In fact, it has the highest recorded levels of omega-3 fatty acids of any land-based plant. These essential fats can support the health of your arteries and help prevent strokes, heart attacks, and other forms of heart disease. Omega-3 fatty acids could also help reduce your risk of dementia and some types of cancer, including breast cancer.
* **Diabetes management**
* Studies show that eating purslane can reduce your fasting blood sugar. That can be a big help if you live with type 2 diabetes. Although more research needs to be done, some data shows that purslane can help people with a high body mass index (BMI) lose excess weight. Getting to a healthy weight is one of the best ways you can manage your blood sugar and prevent diabetes complications.
* [**Bone health**](https://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/features/build-stronger-skeleton#1)
* Purslane is also a great source of two minerals that are important to bone health: calcium and magnesium. Your body doesn't make calcium, so you need to get it regularly from food to have strong bones and teeth. About 60% of the magnesium that you have in your body is stored in your bones. It helps produce bone-building cells and controls a hormone that helps your body use calcium. Getting enough of both these minerals can improve your skeletal health and prevent complications from osteoporosis and aging.
* **Other benefits of purslane**
* Early studies show that natural substances in purslane may also help with:
* Wound healing
* Liver health
* Gastrointestinal issues (such as stomach ulcers)
* Viral  infections
* Bacterial infections
* Yeast infections

But more research still needs to be done.

Purslane looks like a weed but has a surprising amount of health benefits. Grow your own purslane so you can experiment with adding it to your meals. If you have kidney issues, are pregnant, or are nursing, talk to your doctor first.

## Nutrition

Purslane is rich in [folate](https://www.webmd.com/diet/supplement-guide-folic-acid%22%20%5Cl%20%221), a form of vitamin B that supports many of your body's functions, from your vision to your brain health. Doctors recommend that if you're pregnant, you should aim to get at least 400 micrograms of folate daily because it helps avoid birth defects.

Purslane is also an excellent source of:

* [Vitamin A](https://www.webmd.com/vitamins/ai/ingredientmono-964/vitamin-a)
* Vitamin C
* [Potassium](https://www.webmd.com/vitamins/ai/ingredientmono-851/potassium)
* Calcium
* Iron
* Choline
* [Magnesium](https://www.webmd.com/vitamins/ai/ingredientmono-998/magnesium)

**Nutrients per serving**

A one-cup serving of purslane contains:

* Calories: 7
* [Protein](https://www.webmd.com/fitness-exercise/guide/good-protein-sources): Less than 1 gram
* [Fat](https://www.webmd.com/diet/features/good-fat-bad-fat): Less than 1 gram
* [Carbohydrates](https://www.webmd.com/diet/ss/slideshow-carbohydrates-overview): 1 gram
* [Fiber](https://www.webmd.com/diet/guide/fiber-how-much-do-you-need): Less than 1 gram
* Sugar: Less than 1 gram
* **Things to watch out for**
* Purslane contains chemicals called oxalates, which have been linked to kidney stones. These are very hard mineral deposits that form inside your kidneys. They can be painful when they pass through your urinary tract. Sometimes, they get stuck and cause more issues.
* If you're prone to kidney stones, check with your doctor before trying to add purslane, especially purslane seeds, to your diet. Although purslane seeds are tiny, they tend to have higher levels of oxalates than other parts of the plant.
* Purslane also tends to be saltier than other vegetables because of its succulent nature. If you're watching your sodium intake, you may need to limit how much you eat. Otherwise, you could take in way too much salt.
* If you're pregnant or nursing, it's always important to be extra careful about what you eat. Ask your doctor if they think purslane is safe for you to try.

## When Is the Best Time to Grow Purslane?

It's unlikely that you'll find "purslane weed" in the produce section of your grocery store. Sometimes, it's carried in specialty grocery stores or sold at farmer's markets. But you can also grow purslane plants yourself.

Purslane's growing season is between May and August. You'll know it's time when the soil temperature in your garden bed is 85-90 F.

Once you put seeds into the ground (no more than 1/2 inch deep), you'll see them sprout quickly. In 6-8 weeks, purslane is usually ready to eat. You can pull up the whole plant or just trim the stems, leaving about 2 inches at the bottom to allow the leaves to regrow. In the late summer, you'll also start to see bright yellow flowers on very sunny days. You can eat these, too.

Purslane prefers full sun, but you can grow it in any type of soil. Depending on how much moisture your plants get, they could stay close to the ground and spread out to about 3 feet each in diameter. Or they could grow up to 16 inches high.

Because purslane is sensitive to cold temperatures, your plants will probably die off during the first freeze in the fall. But the seeds that remain in the ground may be able to be grown again.

## How to Eat Purslane

Although purslane leaves, stems, and flowers are completely edible, it's safest to only eat this plant if you know where and how it was grown. Because it's usually treated as a weed in the U.S., purslane that you find in a yard or next to a sidewalk could have been sprayed with a chemical.

Even if it comes from your own garden, wash purslane well before eating.

So what does purslane taste like? It's tart. And a little salty. The flavor of purslane has been compared to that of watercress or spinach, making it a great option for salads and other dishes that contain greens. It can be eaten raw or cooked. When heated, purslane becomes moist and sticky. That makes it a good thickener for soups and stews.

Some other ways that you can include purslane in your meals:

* Sauté or steam it as a side dish.
* Chop and add it to tacos.
* Put it in stir-fries.
* Mix into grilled vegetables.
* Use as a garnish.
* Sprinkle purslane flowers onto fish.
* Swap out basil leaves for purslane to make a pesto.
* Layer onto a sandwich instead of lettuce or pickles.
* Replace spinach with purslane in any recipe.
* Pickle purslane stems in vinegar and spices.
* Cook it in an omelet.
* Roll long-stemmed pieces in flour, dip in beaten egg, cover in bread crumbs, and air fry.