



Greetings everyone!

The drought has taken a toll on many gardens around the North Island over the last couple of months, with the driest summer on record for Waiheke Island since record keeping began in 1953! And in fact, one 94yr resident had to buy water for the first time since he arrived in 1948. I have been diverting our washing machine water into buckets to put on my trees and other plants that I don't want to lose, and since I don't have the luxury of a bore, have abandoned my veg garden until the rains come again. Letting a garden lie 'fallow' for periods is actually quite a good practice to help 'rest' the soil before the next growth period.

Last month we looked at some of the *WILD HERBS* we use in our products: particularly Dandelions, and this month we will look at Plantain and NZ Spinach.



Plantago - Major



Plantago Lanceolata

Plantain (Plantago) - Not to be confused with a variety of of 'cooking' banana! (even though they share the same name,) plantain is a common garden weed which has been used since prehistoric times to assist healing both internally and externally. The herb is **astrigent** (constricts pores/vessels with a bitter substance which also stimulates digestive juices), **anti-microbial** (kills unwanted bacteria), **anti-inflammatory** (contains mucilage which is a soothing, 'soapy' substance which expands with water, and 'sticks'), **anti-histamine** (counteracts insect poisons), **expectorant** (helps remove mucus), **styptic** (stops bleeding), and **diuretic** (stimulates the kidneys to reduce water retention). Used as a **poultice** (crushed leaves), it can be applied to soothe and heal insect bites, rashes, minor cuts and wounds. Roman soldiers used these to stop wounds from bleeding and infection. Internally taken as a tea, as an addition to salads (or in the Herb Spread!), or boiled with honey to make a syrup, plantain can be used to assist coughs and bronchitis, stomach upsets, indigestion, and ulcers.

Plantain seed husks expand and become 'mucilaginous' when wet, especially those of *P. psyllium*, which is used in common over-the-counter bulk laxative and fiber supplement products such as Metamucil. *P. psyllium* seed is useful for constipation and irritable bowel syndrome. Recent research is also showing it to be promising in lowering cholesterol and controlling diabetes.

New Zealand Spinach, (*Tetragonia tetragonioides*) is a leafy groundcover also known as **Warrigal Greens**, **Kokihi**, **Sea Spinach**, **Botany Bay Spinach**, **Tetragon** and **Cook's Cabbage**. It is native to New Zealand as well as Australia, Argentina, Chile and Japan.

The species, surprisingly rarely used by the Maori, was first mentioned by Captain Cook. It was immediately picked, cooked, and pickled to help fight scurvy, and taken back to England with the crew of the Endeavour.

Preferring a moist, part shady environment, **NZ Spinach** will grow almost all year round in the right place, having a similar flavour and texture to regular spinach, especially when cooked. However, like other members of the spinach family, it is very high in oxalates, which can be calcifying/hardening within the body, and cause acidic/arthritis conditions. Oxalates can be removed by blanching the spinach (or silverbeet) in hot water for one minute before cooking. Best of all, it is not bothered by any insects or diseases, thriving to become an invasive plant in North and South America, but still considered an heirloom vegetable here, quite happy in a high saline, coastal environment. High in iron, Vitamin C, calcium, phosphorous and potassium.



Herb Spread Recipes of the Month:



Stuffed Baked Potatoes!

Take 1 large potato for each person, wash well and cut in half lengthways for quicker baking, or leave whole to avoid having to cut around the top later as the cut surface gets a bit tough.

Bake for about 40minutes in a moderately hot oven until soft. Scoop out the inside of the potato into a large bowl, leaving the outer skin intact.

Add a variety of the following ingredients to the potato mixture: Tuna and onion, broccoli and ham, leek and salami, etc.

Also add a pinch each of salt and pepper, a spoonful of **Herb Spread**, half a cup of cream cheese or cottage cheese, and a

handful of fresh herbs to add extra flavour! - oregano, thyme and parsley are nice!

Or, even try curry or chilli sauce!

Grate extra cheese on top, and heat up in the oven until the cheese is melted.

Serve with extra vegetables or a salad! Still yum the next day in lunchboxes or quickly reheated.

If anyone has any stories they would like to share about using herbs personally, or their favorite Herb Spread recipe, send us an email and we will feature it in the next issue!

Wishing you all health, wealth and well-being

From Wendy and Waiheke Herbs Team