

SOUR DOCK

Latin: *Rumex arcticus, crispus, or longifolius*

Alutiiq: Aatunaq
Haida: Tl'áań'uuj
Lingít: Tl'aak'wách'
Tanaina: Tash'i
Unangam tunuu: Aalungaayaġ
Inupiq: Quaġaq
Yup'ik: Angukaq

USES:

- **Culinary**
 - Leaves are commonly used in cooked salads, soups, and sauces due to their tart flavor.. They are simmered, strained, and sweetened to make a juice that is high in vitamin C.
- **Medicinal**
 - Traditionally, Sour Dock has been used for its potential digestive benefits assisting in motility.
- **Cultural**
 - Sour Dock has significance in various Indigenous cultures as a common vegetable, often used in traditional dishes or remedies.

Sour Dock thrives in a temperate climate with cool to moderate temperatures. It is commonly found in all regions of Alaska, particularly in moist, disturbed soils such as meadows, roadsides, and gardens. They especially like to grow next to bodies of water.



ROOTS

The root system consists of a deep taproot that allows the plant to access moisture and nutrients.



LEAVES

The leaves of Sour Dock are elongated, arrow-shaped, and can be smooth or slightly wavy. They are typically bright green and can vary in size. They tend to have a reddish hue on the edges of the leaves as they age. Leaves have oxalic acid in them and need to be cooked, especially when they are uncurled and aging.



FLOWERS

Sour Dock produces small, greenish flowers that cluster in elongated spikes. The flowering occurs in late spring to early summer.

ABOUT

Sour Dock is a perennial herb that grows upright, typically reaching heights of 6 inches to 18 inches tall. It has spear-head-shaped or surfboard-shaped leaves with pointed ends and prominent veins, giving off a slightly sour scent when crushed.

Sour Dock grows in rosettes and can spread through seed and vegetative means, forming colonies. The curly dock variants can be especially aggressive and generally are not transplanted. However, the sour dock variants are easy to maintain in a garden setting.

PLANT HISTORY

Sour Dock patches have been cultivated for centuries by families and communities, valued for their culinary uses and medicinal properties in various cultures.

HARVESTING

Leaves can be harvested by cutting them at the base of the stem.
The best harvest time is early spring before flowering begins for optimal tenderness and flavor. Fresh leaves can be stored in the refrigerator for a few days, and dried leaves can be preserved for longer use.

COOKING

Due to its oxalic acid content, the plant requires heat treatment to be edible. Once blanched, the young leaves can be used in salads, soups, or sautéed as greens. Fresh leaves can be stored in a cool, dry place or refrigerated for short-term use. They can also be simmered and then frozen.

CAUTIONS

While Sour Dock is generally safe to consume, note that it can be confused with other species in the Rumex genus that may have varying levels of oxalic acid, which has to be cooked, and may be harmful in excessive amounts. Limit consumption to two cups a day.