

# FGCU Food Forest

## Plant Database

### Moringa (*Moringa oleifera*)

#### Quick Facts

**Origin:** India.

**Description:** Moringa, or Horseradish Tree, is a hardy, fast growing tree that can reach 45 ft. tall at maturity. The leaves are tripinnate and fern-like with off-white flowers and long, brown leguminous-like seed pods.

**Uses:** Food and medicine; living fences and anti-erosive hedges; water purification; oil used for cooking, cosmetics, and hair and skin treatments.

**Harvest:** Year-round. Seedpods can be harvested during the summer months in Florida.

**Flower:** Flowers are about 2.5cm. in diameter, white, or off-white, and have yellow stamens.

**Tolerance:** Extremely drought tolerant; cold hardy down to 32°F, but will die back to the ground in freeze events and regrow from the roots during warm months.



**General Description:** Moringa, or Horeseradish Tree, is an extremely fast-growing tree that can reach a height of 45 ft. in the tropics, although they are usually coppiced to stay around 6 ft. tall for easier harvesting. Although not considered a true vegetable, the tripinnate leaves are a delicious and healthy edible. Moringa is used worldwide for many different purposes.

- **Native Origin:** Northwestern India.
- **General History:** *Moringa oleifera*, also known as the Horseradish Tree or Ben Oil Tree, is native to the southern foothills of the Himalaya Mountains in northwestern India. Moringa has been used by Indians for thousands of years, and has been naturalized and widely used in many other Asian and African countries for at least a few centuries.

- **Distribution:** Tropics and subtropics worldwide; naturalized in Florida, USA, and widely cultivated in the Caribbean, on many Pacific Islands, and throughout Asia and Africa. Moringa is grown as a dieback perennial leaf crop in temperate climates.
- **Season of Harvest:** Year-round; seedpods harvested during summer months in Florida, USA.
- **Culinary Uses:** Every part of *Moringa oleifera* is edible except for the wood. The leaves, flowers, roots, bark, and young seedpods can be consumed by humans, although some parts need to be cooked first. The leaves can be eaten raw, but are cooked into curries along with the seedpods in many Asian countries. Raw leaves are often incorporated into salads along with other perennial and annual greens, and young seedpods can also be pickled. Moringa leaves are considered one of the healthiest greens in the world. The flowers can also be cooked, and taste similar to popcorn when fried in oil. Young seedpods have been incorporated into a variety of dishes, especially in Thailand and the Philippines, although they can simply be cooked like green beans. Dried mature seeds can be made into an oil, commonly called Ben Oil or Benzoi, and can be used in cooking and for other purposes. A variety of medicinal uses have also been recorded.

<b>Moringa</b>	
<b>Scientific Classification</b>	
Kingdom:	Plantae
(unranked):	Angiosperms
(unranked):	Eudicots
(unranked):	Rosids
Order:	Brassicales
Family:	Moringaceae
Genus:	<i>Moringa</i>
Species:	<b><i>M. oleifera</i></b>

#### **Sources**

Toensmeier, Eric. *Perennial Vegetables: from artichoke to zuiki taro, a gardener's guide to over 100 delicious, easy-to-grow edibles*. Pg. 167-169. White River junction, Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 2007. Print.

[https://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/duke\\_energy/Moringa\\_oleifera.html](https://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/duke_energy/Moringa_oleifera.html)

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