

Sea Parsley (*Apium prostratum*)

Description

Biennial or perennial prostrate growing herb to 1 m diameter. Broad-leaf form has glossy green leaves the size and shape of parsley. Narrow-leaf form has celery-shaped and sized leaves. Small clusters of insignificant white/cream flowers for long periods through Summer and Autumn.

It occurs naturally in coastal foreshore areas and some inland waterways of Qld, NSW, Vic, SA and WA. Different variations of this species can be found in mountainous terrain, wetlands and swamps and occasionally inland.

The intense parsley/celery flavoured leaves may be picked at any time of the year. Leaves are used as a garnish or to flavour salads, soups, seafoods, stews and casseroles.



Figure 2. Sea Parsley

Production

Although this crop appears to have potential, current use is largely experimental. It is an adaptable species for lighter textured soils. Broad leaf form will withstand full sun exposure but produces better quality leaves if receiving some shade. Narrow leaved form prefers a shaded position. Withstands full coastal foreshore exposure. Tolerates moderate frosts and alkaline soil conditions. Requires adequate water to produce well.



Figure 3. Young Sea Parsley plant



Figure 4. Sea Parsley in production

Slender Mint (*Mentha diemenica*)



Figure 5. Slender Mint

Description

Slender Mint (*Mentha diemenica*) is a perennial prostrate herb with a dense mat-forming habit, strong scent/flavour, and profusion of mauve or lilac coloured flowers during the warmer months. Its small oval-shaped leaves (to 20 mm) yield a strong mint aroma when crushed.

The wild forms of Slender Mint occur naturally in all states of Australia, though it is rarely seen. It is generally found in moist places along streams, rivers or swamps on a wide range of soil types from lower rainfall areas (400 mm) to coastal and alpine regions. Will tolerate full sun to heavy shade.

Slender Mint is a strong culinary herb with a unique "spearmint" flavour. It is generally used sparingly to provide a subtle flavour. It can be used in the same way as the common mint and added to cool summer drinks.

Production

Slender Mint is a hardy, fast growing adaptable herb preferring a sunny, moderately watered to damp position. It grows on alkaline and acidic soils, tolerates frosts, and during droughts will die back to its underground rhizomes and become dormant only to re-emerge rapidly after rains. In optimal conditions, this plant may become invasive. It can be controlled by removal of the suckers.

Wild Basil (*Ocimum americanum*)

Description

Wild Basil is a compact perennial shrubby herb, usually 300 to 600 mm high under cultivation. The rounded leaves are covered with very fine hairs, and when crushed release a powerful aroma similar to common Basil, but unique to this species. It produces sprays of purple, lavender-like flowers to 80 mm long during the warmer months.

Wild Basil occurs in the drier regions of central, coastal and inland Qld, usually along water courses, under a wide range of rainfall and soil conditions.

Leaves are strongly lime scented with a hint of sweet basil. They can be picked at any time of the year and are used as a garnish, or to flavour salads, soups, stews, casseroles, and in pesto. When soaked in water the seeds swell into a gelatinous mass and can be used to thicken and flavour soups, or as an ingredient in sweet, cooling beverages.



Figure 6. Wild Basil

Production

Wild Basil is a fast growing herb which is frost tender and thrives on a wide range of soils. It prefers full sun to partial shade with a moderately watered position and benefits from a handful of organic fertiliser (eg. Blood and Bone) in the bottom of the hole at planting (not in direct contact with the roots), and frequent side dressings during the growing season.

Potential returns

It is too early to estimate the potential returns, yields and production costs for these species under cultivation in South Australia. Currently, wholesalers pay in the range of \$15/kg for fresh Warrigal Spinach.

Further information

Further information on native crops is contained in the other publications in this series:

Australian Native Citrus – Wild Species, Cultivars and Hybrids

Bush Tomato/Desert Raisin Production

Miscellaneous Native Food Crops – Davidson and Illawarra Plums

Miscellaneous Native Food Crops – Herbs and Vegetables with Potential in SA

Mountain Pepper Production

Muntries Production

Native Food Background Notes

Native Food Crops – Frequently Asked Questions

Quandong Production

The Native Food Industry in SA

Wattleseed Production

These fact sheets are also available for download from the CSIRO/RIRDC Native Foods Website at <http://www.cce.csiro.au/research/nativefoods/> and PIRSA website www.pir.sa.gov.au or from the national PrimeNotes CD.

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