

Spinach, New Zealand — *Tetragonia tetragonioides* (Pallas) O. Ktze.¹

James M. Stephens²

New Zealand spinach is used in the same manner as spinach, but the plant is very different. It reaches a height of 1-2 feet and is much branched, spreading to 2-3 feet across. When the plant has reached a spread of 1 foot or so, the 2 or 3 inches at the end of the branches (tender shoots, tips, and leaves) may be harvested with a knife. New growth will arise along these cut branches and their ends may also be harvested.



Figure 1.

CULTURE AND USE

Since cutting back too heavily will retard growth and reduce the total yield, the gardener must learn from experience how much to harvest each time under his own conditions. Commercially, whole plants are usually cut above ground when small. New growth from the cut stem base will produce a later crop.

New Zealand spinach has a flavor very similar to, but milder than, common spinach. It is a heat-resistant, warm weather plant that is frost sensitive. For this reason, it is promising for summer greens in Florida gardens. It grows very well throughout the state and is bothered by few pests.

The seeds are large and germinate slowly. Soaking the seeds for 24 hours before planting helps in germination. Space rows 24-30 inches apart, and space plants 12-15 inches apart.

In Florida, plant in early spring, fall, or throughout the winter in the southern part of the state. First foliage is ready for harvest about 2 months after seeding.

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