

Spinach, Malabar
Basella alba
Annual Vine (Vegetable)

Light: Sun

Water: Medium

Mature Size: Can grow to 8-10 ft.

Bloom Time: At maturity

Bloom Color: White-tinged pink

Propagation: Propagation from seed is a snap and the red-stemmed cultivar of Malabar spinach comes true from seed. Saving seed is easy too: Simply dry the entire fruit and use it for planting the following year. Stem and tip cuttings may be employed as well. Malabar spinach grows easily from seed or from cuttings. Scarify seed (use a file, sharp knife or sandpaper to carefully cut through the tough seed coat) to speed germination, which may take 3 weeks or more.

Plant Attributes: Leaves are edible.

Care/Problems: Wait until soil has warmed and all danger of frost has passed before transplanting -- at least 2-3 weeks after last frost date. Space transplants about 12 inches apart. Requires consistent moisture to keep from flowering, which causes bitterness in leaves. Requires trellis or other support for twining vine. Can follow peas up the same trellis.

Comments: It goes by many other common names besides Malabar spinach, including Ceylon spinach, Indian spinach, vine spinach, and Malabar nightshade. Malabar spinach grows eight-ten feet tall and wide and produces inconspicuous white-tinged pink flowers in its leaf axils. Upon fertilization, the flowers develop into small, highly ornamental, single-seeded purple berries.