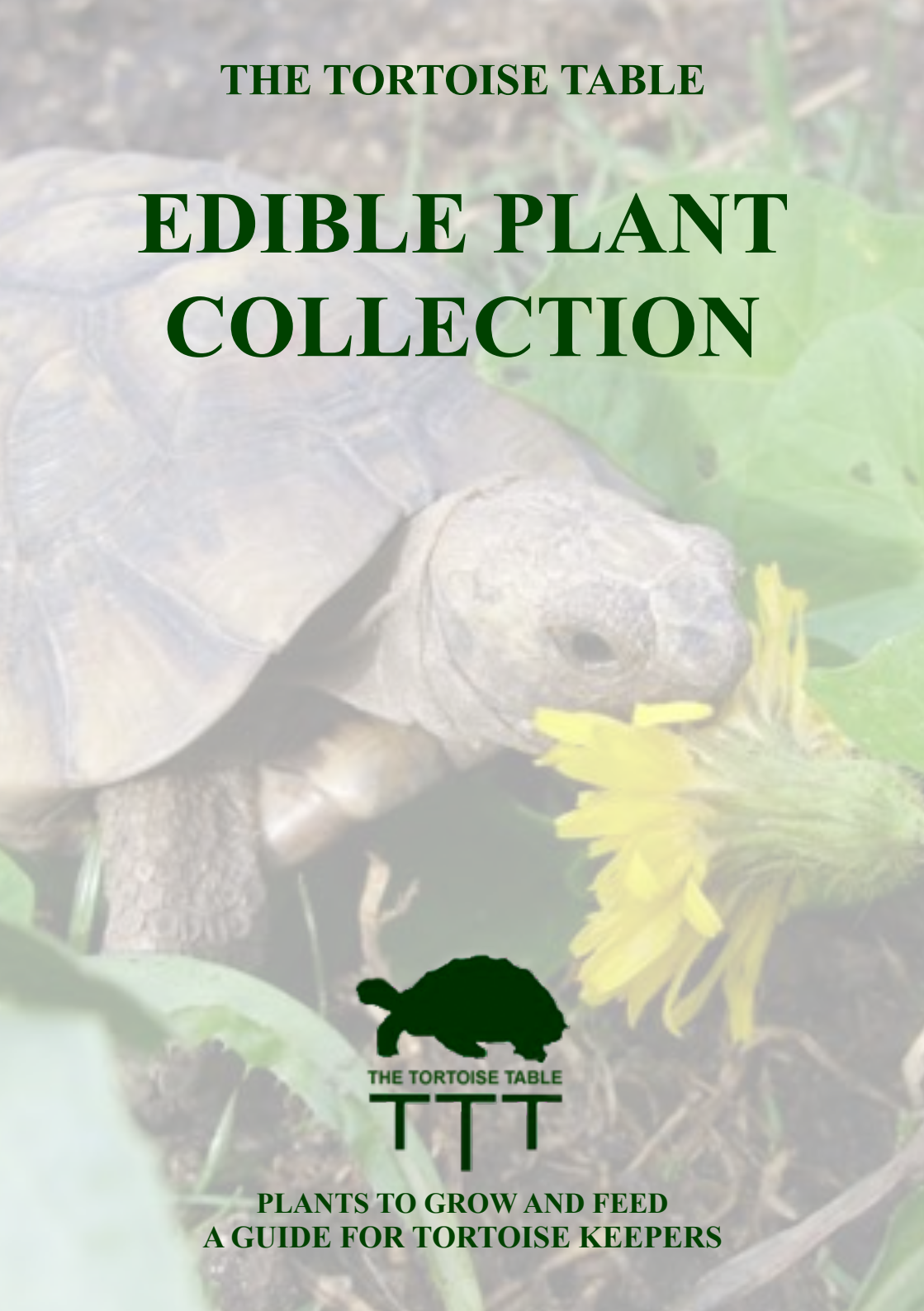
THE TORTOISE TABLE

EDIBLE PLANT COLLECTION



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PLANTS TO GROW AND FEED
A GUIDE FOR TORTOISE KEEPERS

The Tortoise Table

Edible Plants Collection

Plants to Grow and Feed

to Tortoises

by

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The Tortoise Table 2023

Contents

Introduction	3
The Plant Collection	3
Seed collection	4
Abutilon	6
Alexanders	7
Bergamot	8
Bristly Oxtongue	9
Clover	10
Coreopsis	11
Corn Salad	12
Cranesbill Geranium	13
Dandelion	14
Elephant's Ears	15
Evening Primrose	16
Flowering Currant	17
Forget-Me-Not	18
Fuchsia	19
Goat's Beard	20
Heartleaf Iceplant	21
Hollyhock	22
House Leek	23
Knapweed	24
Livingstone Daisy	25
Marigold	26
Milk Thistle	27
Mimulus	28
Mind-Your-Own-Business	29
Musk Mallow	30
Nemesia	31
Nipplewort	32
Opuntia	33

Pansy/Violet 34
Peperomia 35
Prayer Plant 36
Red Valerian 37
Sea Holly 38
Sedum 39
Self-heal 40
Sow Thistle 41
Speedwell 42
Spider Plant 43
Sweet Woodruff 44
Teasel 45
Thyme 46
Violet 47
Yellow Archangel 48
Yucca 49
Zinnia 50

Introduction

We hope that this booklet will provide you with an easy-to-follow guide on growing plants to help provide a nutritious diet for your tortoise. It is designed to help you choose plants to grow, both in the garden and the tortoise enclosure, which will benefit the health and living conditions of your tortoise, as well as giving you an attractive garden.

Our 'traffic light' system is used as the colour of the plant name and is also the colour of the bar at the top of each page. The coding is: green for 'safe to feed'; amber for 'feed sparingly or in moderation'; and red for 'do not feed'. See the 'How to Use the Database' section on the website for further information (www.thetortoisetable.org.uk). There are no red codes in this booklet as all plants here are edible.

The Plant Collection

The plants and wild flowers shown in this booklet can all be found either growing in the British countryside, in gardens or purchased from garden centres, and they are all listed on The Tortoise Table website. All the plants are easily grown from seeds or cuttings and interestingly may not be listed on some of the usual tortoise diet lists.

If you buy plants for a tortoise enclosure, please remember that you should allow the plant to grow on for a while in plain potting soil without added fertilisers. To avoid

feeding material that may have been contaminated with pesticides, only give your tortoise the new growth of flowers and leaves.

Seed Collection

If you collect seeds from wild flowers they should be 'ripe', i.e. just on the point of dispersing. Only take the few seeds you need and leave the majority on the plant where they belong. Collect dry seed heads on a warm sunny day and store in a paper bag until you're ready to plant them. When collecting seeds it's a good idea to wait until some of them have dispersed from the plant and collect the ones that are next in line on the stem.

If seeds are from wild flowers take note of the surroundings and ground where you found the plant, as that is the type of environment in which the plant likes to grow. When growing seeds or cuttings, take risks and experiment with them: what have you got to lose? Try different methods, and remember that warmth is the key to propagating any plant. Choose a warm area to grow your seeds and cuttings where the temperatures can be kept stable, and don't be afraid to have a go.

In the individual entries that follow, we sometimes advise that plants can be planted inside the indoor or outdoor tortoise enclosures, to provide tasty snacks for your tortoise. Please note that any edible plant grown in the tortoise enclosure is liable to be eaten to the ground by your tortoise

— and therefore destroyed — in a very short time, and so you might want to consider some protection around the plant. An empty clear plastic bottle with top and bottom cut off and pushed into the soil will protect small plants, while still allowing them to receive light, and can be removed for short periods to allow nibbling; and an upturned hanging basket will allow the tortoise to nibble growth protruding through the wire frame while still protecting the mother plant.

Abutilon (Flowering Maple)

Latin: *Abutilon*
Family: Malvaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

Some Abutilon are hardy if planted in a sheltered position and can be planted in the enclosure to provide food as well as shade.



They reach heights of 2.4 m (8 ft), but protection is needed to prevent them being eaten to the ground.

Abutilons like well-drained, moist soil, and will flower well into the winter if growing needs are met.

Taking cuttings from new soft growth is easy if you remove the lower leaves from cuttings and pot up during spring. Cuttings can also be placed into a jar of water to root.



Alexanders (Horse Parsley, Smyrnium)

Latin: *Smyrnium olusatrum; S. perfoliatum*
Family: Umbelliferae/Apiaceae
Edible Parts: All parts except seeds



A crisp, fresh sturdy plant found growing early in April or May around coastal areas, roadsides and waste ground. Growing to a height of almost 122 cm (4 ft), Alexanders produces a yellow flower (umbel) during its second season of growth and has leaves that smell of celery. This plant should be grown in well-drained soil, but the seeds can take a while to germinate.

If Alexanders likes its growing conditions, be careful, as it can be invasive. Keep under control by removing flower heads before they set seed.



Bergamot

(Bee Balm, Oswego Tea, Scarlet Monarda)
Latin: *Monarda spp.*
Family: Lamiaceae/Labiatae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



Once established, Bergamot will grow to a height of 130 cm (4 ft) and will self seed, so it could become quite troublesome if not kept under control. Seeds can be collected when readyto disperse in autumn and stored until spring, when the soil starts to warm.



Sow seeds directly where you want them to grow, or let them fall naturally and they will grow in situ if conditions are right.

Bergamot gives off a citrus aroma that some tortoises might not like.

Bristly Oxtongue

(Bristly Ox-tongue, Bristly Ox Tongue)
Latin: *Picris echioides; Helminthotheca echioides; Helmintia echioides*
Family: *Asteraceae/Compositae*
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



Growing to a height of 0.9 m (36 in.), the Bristly Oxtongue will grow almost anywhere and is simple to propagate from seeds that you may have collected from wild plants. These can be sown in spring, where they are to grow, by only slightly covering the seeds with soil.



Due to the bitter taste of the leaves and possibly the prickly texture, many tortoises will not eat the leaves but they will happily enjoy a flower or two.

Clover

Latin: *Trifolium spp.*
Family: Fabaceae/Leguminosae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

Although Clover is high in protein, it is fine to feed in small quantities, and tortoises can graze on it where it appears naturally among the lawn grass.



However, many species of Clover contain compounds that can cause photosensitivity in mammals and White Clover (*Trifolium repens*) can develop cyanogenic compounds if leaves are dried or damaged by wind or frost, so it is best to feed only young fresh leaves.



Clover is easily grown by scattering seed in spring, and as long as it has good contact with the soil, seedlings will soon sprout.

Coreopsis (Tickseed)

Latin: *Coreopsis spp.*
Family: Asteraceae/Compositae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

Coreopsis can grow to a height of between 60-90 cm (24-36 in.). They are easy to grow and a lovely addition to the tortoise garden, where you can enjoy a long flowering period from early summer to late autumn.



Seeds can be planted where you want them to grow outside in April, or indoors earlier, and kept moist, so you can transplant outside after the last frost has passed.



Once established, Coreopsis should self seed and could become a nuisance unless you deadhead to prevent seeds forming.

Corn Salad

Latin: *Valerianella spp., esp. Valerianella locusta*
Family: Valerianaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



The low growing Corn Salad is a good addition to the enclosure and the diet of tortoises.

It is easily propagated from seed, where it can be grown in situ during the autumn and will be ready for harvest in the early spring for tortoises just emerging from hibernation when other weeds are scarce. If allowed to flower, Corn Salad should freely self-seed and you will have new plants the following year.



This common wild flower of cultivated land and waste spaces resembles the Forget-Me-Not.

Cranesbill Geranium

Latin: *Geranium spp.*
Family: Geraniaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



These beautiful delicate flowers are hardy enough to plant in the garden from seeds germinated indoors in spring and planted out after the danger of frost has passed, and they easily become established providing the soil is well drained.



Not to be confused with the non-hardy Pelargonium, this true hardy Geranium comes in a wide range of colours, from the palest pinks to the deepest blues and purples, and will enhance any tortoise enclosure and provide tasty snacks. The common name of Cranesbill derives from the fact that the seed pods resemble the beaks of Cranes.

Dandelion

Latin: *Taraxacum officinale*
Family: Asteraceae/Compositae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

Where would we be without the Dandelion? Although seemingly indispensable, only feed as part of a wider varied diet, as it does contain oxalic acid and oxalates (especially in older leaves).



Collect seeds on the point of dispersal from the parent plant on a warm, dry day. Dandelions aren't fussy where they grow, so plant in deep pots in ordinary garden soil or in the ground. They may take a while to germinate, preferring soil temperatures of around 25°C (77°F), and with some protection over winter they can provide leaves for tortoise food all the year round.



Elephant's Ears (Elephants Ears)

Latin: *Bergenia spp.*
Family: Saxifragaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



Elephant's Ears contain tannins, which are not toxic but do have a rather bitter taste, so it is better to only offer it in moderation as part of a varied diet. This plant starts to grow in late winter/ early spring.



You can propagate Elephant's Ears by root division in autumn or spring by digging around the parent plant and splitting the rootball up into sections, which can each be planted individually.

They dislike hot, dry conditions and prefer a moist but well-drained soil in sun or partial shade, but they will tolerate poor soil and an exposed site.

Evening Primrose

Latin: *Oenothera biennis*
Family: Onagraceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



The seed capsules of Evening Primrose hold many tiny seeds and should be left on the parent plant until they are dry and ready to open. The plants grow best in a sunny situation on well-drained soil, planted straight into the ground or tortoise enclosure. Plant during late spring after the risk of frost is over.



Most Evening Primroses have yellow flowers, but there are some varieties that come in pink or white. Tortoises enjoy eating both the leaves (especially the young ones) and the flowers. These plants are annual or biennial so may not flower until the second year.

Flowering Currant (Ribes)

Latin: *Ribes sanguineum*
Family: Grossulariaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

The Flowering Currant can be planted in the tortoise enclosure as shelter from the hot sun and rain.



With edible leaves and intricate flowers, this small hardy shrub is easily propagated from new spring growth. Place cuttings that are 10-15 cm (4-6 in.) long in water, with the lower leaves removed, until roots appear, and then plant up in pots ready to go outside in early mid-summer.



Keep moist until established and you will soon have a plant that a tortoise can use as food and shelter (but do remove the fruits, unless your tortoise is a fruit-eating species).

Forget-Me-Not

Latin: *Myosotis spp.*
Family: Boraginaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

The beautiful blue and pink haze of Forget-Me-Nots is a welcome sight during spring. Forget-Me-Nots are easily grown from seed and should be planted in rich, well-drained soil in the autumn.



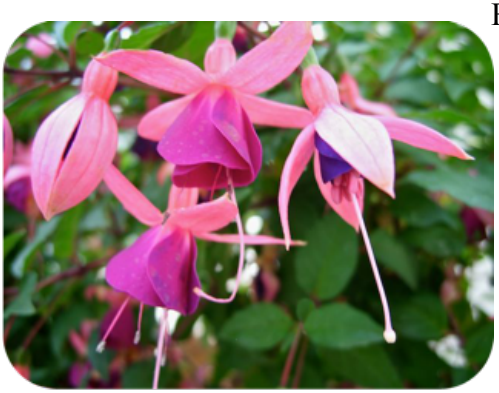
These plants like to grow in semi-shaded moist areas but will grow equally well in full sun if they are watered regularly. Once the flowers have set seed, the seeds can be scattered around and new plants will quickly establish themselves, offering their beauty for many years.



Tortoises will eat all parts of this plant so it is an especially useful addition to the tortoise garden.

Fuchsia

Latin: *Fuchsia spp.*
Family: Onagraceae
Edible Parts: Flowers and leaves



Fuchsias can be used as edible landscape plants as they have a long flowering season late into the year, with some of the hardier varieties still in bloom in early winter. They are easily propagated by pinching out shoots that grow from the main stem during spring.



Snip off young shoots with three pairs of leaves attached. Remove the lower leaves and place in water or compost indoors or in a greenhouse until roots start to develop, which should take a couple of weeks, depending on the temperature. The new plants may be planted in pots or outside in the tortoise enclosure, to provide extra shade and more variety to the tortoise's diet.

Goat's Beard (Goats Beard, Salsify)

Latin: *Tragopogon spp.*
Family: Asteraceae/Compositae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

The yellow or lilac-coloured flowers of Goat's Beard take two years to bloom from planting and can grow to 90 cm (3 ft) in height. Seeds from the huge, Dandelion type of seed head can be removed from the parent plant at the point of dispersal and planted out where they are to grow during the autumn after harvest.





These plants prefer sunny areas but can tolerate drought conditions and temperatures from -28°C to 40°C (-18°F to 104°F).

Goat's Beard can become an invasive plant if growing conditions are good. You can keep it under control by removing the seed heads.

Heartleaf Iceplant (Baby Sun Rose, Aptenia)

Latin: *Aptenia cordifolia*
Family: Aizoaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



This succulent plant grows well in hanging baskets, as ground cover or in pots. Cuttings are easily obtained by taking a piece of stem, removing the bottom leaves and potting the stem in compost during spring, or by planting the cutting where it is to grow during late spring or early summer. Rooting should take place within three weeks, so keep the cuttings moist until well established.



This plant can also be easily propagated from runners or from seed which should be sown in a sunny position in the garden. The flowers are most often red, but can also be found in purple.

Hollyhock

Latin: *Alcea rosea*
Family: Malvaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



This plant produces both leaves and beautiful flowers in rich colours that tortoises will enjoy eating. Hollyhocks grown from seeds take two years to flower on spikes that can grow up to 3 m (10 ft) tall. The seeds may be planted in deep pots during the spring, or planted straight out in full sun. The soil should be kept moist until new growth is established. Hollyhocks do well in most soil types, and once the plants are fully established these lovely flowers from the Mallow family self-seed. To encourage more flower spikes pinch out the growing tip early in the season. Hollyhocks are often attacked by slugs and snails which are best removed by hand and should not be eradicated with the usual toxic chemical treatments.



House Leek (Sempervivum, Hens and Chicks)

Latin: *Sempervivum spp.*
Family: Crassulaceae

Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



Sempervivums are easy to care for and to propagate. They can grow outdoors all year round or be planted in the indoor enclosure for tortoises to nibble on (but do take care as eating too much of them can result in the tortoise having loose stools).



Sempervivums produce small plantlets (babies) that can be pulled off and potted into a well drained soil.

It's a good idea to place a layer of gravel over the top of the soil, as they don't like their lower leaves to be wet.

Knapweed

Latin: *Centaurea scabiosa; C. nigra; C. stoebe*
Family: Asteraceae/Compositae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



Flowering from early spring to the end of summer, Knapweed is fine to plant in the tortoise garden to add some colour.

The plants can be propagated from seed collected from dried flower heads and then sown indoors or in an unheated greenhouse during October or April and potted up until they go outdoors after the frosts.



Once established, larger clumps of Knapweed can be divided and planted straight into their flowering positions, either in early spring or late autumn.

Livingstone Daisy

Latin: *Mesembryanthemum criniflorum*
Family: Aizoaceae/Ficoidaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



These beautiful plants flower in late spring and continue to bloom throughout summer into November.The flowers come in striking colours and are easily raised from seeds which should be planted under cover in March.



They are especially suitable for low growing borders, pots and hanging baskets where they open on sunny days and make a welcome addition to the garden and tortoise diet, adding variation as well as colour. Seeds can be harvested once the red pods are dry and have turned brown. Pods require opening by hand and are quite tough, but each seed pod holds many tiny seeds.

Marigold (Pot Marigold, Field Marigold)

Latin: *Calendula spp.*
Family: Asteraceae/Compositae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



The bright yellow or orange flowers of this traditional English cottage garden plant are a welcome, colourful addition to the garden and to the tortoise's diet. The leaves are edible too.

Marigolds can be grown in early spring from seed that you have bought (just follow the sowing instructions on the packet), or that you collected the previous year.



You can also buy young plants in the spring and plant them out in your garden after danger of frost has passed. They grow to 0.3 m-0.6 m (12-24 in.) and will provide your tortoise with tasty snacks all summer.

Milk Thistle (Blessed Thistle, Mary Thistle)

Latin: *Silybum marianum*
Family: Asteraceae/Compositae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

In ideal conditions, Milk Thistle can grow to 180-210 cm (6-7 ft). Sow the seeds outdoors after the last frost, where you want them to grow. Because of its ability to extract nitrates from the soil, it is better to grow this plant outside the tortoise enclosure, in un-enriched soil, and then just offer leaves to the tortoise so that you control the amount of Milk Thistle in the diet.





Remember, if you don't want this plant all over the garden you should remove the seed head before seeds have dispersed.

Mimulus (Monkey Flower)

Latin: *Mimulus spp.*
Family: Phyrmaceae/Scrophulariaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



Mimulus may be planted in borders, hanging baskets or pots. The flowers come in a range of colours and the plants can grow to a height of about 30 cm (12 in.).



They are safe to grow in the tortoise enclosure, providing colour and a useful snack. Grow from seed during March and plant in rich, well-drained soil. Keep the seeds warm and moist until germination takes place in around ten days, or they can be sown in situ after the last frost has passed. Mimulus like semi-shade but will grow almost anywhere providing they are kept moist. Cutting off any fading or dead flowers will encourage new growth.

Mind-Your-Own-Business (Baby's Tears)

Latin: *Soleirolia soleirolii*
Family: Urticaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



Mind-Your-Own-Business is safe to feed to tortoises, but its creeping habit means that it can become quite invasive, so either keep it in check or grow it in pots to keep it contained.

Propagation is easy: just lift a small piece and place it on a shallow dish of water and it will soon root. Seeds can be shaken over flagstones where they look nice growing between cracks in the paving.



This plant will disappear during the winter but will be back again as soon as the frosts go.

Musk Mallow

Latin: *Malva moschata*
Family: Malvaceae
Edible parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



The Musk Mallow is fine for tortoises providing it hasn't been grown on nitrogen-rich soil (where it will absorb the nitrates and concentrate them in high levels in the leaves), in which case it should be avoided. Growing to 0.8 m (2ft 7in.), this easy-growing plant is not frost hardy, so should be planted in a sunny, well-drained spot.



Seeds can be sown in early spring indoors and then planted out after all danger of frost has passed. Mature Musk Mallow will often self-seed, but you can help it along by shaking the seeds out of the ripe seed pods so that they fall on the ground where you want them to grow.

Nemesia

Latin: *Nemesia spp.*
Family: Scrophulariaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



These low-growing plants are suitable for hanging baskets, containers or garden borders. They are around for a short period during the summer and are easily grown from seed which should be germinated inside during March and April. Young plants can be planted out once danger of frost has passed.



Nemesia like full sun but will also do well in partial shade. They prefer well-drained moist compost during germination. Your tortoises will love the occasional addition of Nemesia to their diet.

Nipplewort

Latin: *Lapsana communis*
Family: Asteraceae/Compositae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

Nipplewort is fine to incorporate in the tortoise enclosure and will readily seed itself as long as the ground is not too hard and it likes the growing conditions. This plant can reach a height of 90 cm (3 ft), and seeds can be collected when mature during late autumn and sown where they are to grow just under the soil surface to emerge the following spring.



Alternatively, they can be sown outside in early spring and will overwinter after producing a basal rosette and flowers the following year.



Opuntia (Prickly Pear, Nopales)

Latin: *Opuntia spp.*
Family: Cactaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

This cactus is a plant you should never run out of because of the ease of propagation. All you need to do is remove or cut a pad in half, keep it in a warm dry area, and wait a week or so until the cut area of the pad forms a callous. Once this happens it can be potted in a cactus medium, watered, left for a couple of weeks and then watered again.





Roots will quickly develop, and once new pads have grown on the plant they can be removed to start the whole process again.

N.B. Do not over water this plant or it will rot and die.

Pansy/Viola

Latin: *Viola spp.*
Family: Violaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

All parts of Pansies and Violas are edible and make a welcome addition to the tortoise enclosure, as they grow for most of the year and come in handy for winter feeding too. They are cheap to buy but are easy to grow providing you save a plant or two and collect the seeds from the pods just before the capsule disperses them.





The seeds can either be planted in the spring, or easier still they can be sown into pots in the winter, and left outside where they will start growing when the conditions are right.

Peperomia

Latin: *Peperomia spp.*
Family: Piperaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



Peperomia is a low growing houseplant in the UK and easy to propagate by stem cuttings. Remove the lower leaves and place the cuttings in a pot of light soil or pearlite and keep moist, not wet, or they will rot.



It likes a higher humidity than most houseplants, and this can be achieved by placing the pot on a dish of water containing pebbles. Peperomia can be grown on an east or west facing window, and tortoises will benefit from the leaves providing you haven't used any fertilisers.

Prayer Plant

Latin: *Maranta leuconeura*
Family: Marantaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

This common houseplant can be grown indoors to provide a year-long supply of leaves to add variety to a tortoise's diet. Pot into plain compost without any additives and never use pesticides on houseplants that will be offered to tortoises. The Prayer Plant dislikes dry air, so standing on a large dish of pebbles filled with water will create the humidity it requires for healthy growth.





During spring, you can repot and split the plant (division) by teasing the roots apart, or using leaf node cuttings taken from the base of the plant. These should be placed in fresh water until the roots are about an inch in length and then the cutting may be potted on into compost.

Red Valerian

Latin: *Centranthus ruber*
Family: Valerianaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

Flowers of the Red Valerian may be red, pink or white and the leaves are grey-green. It can grow to a height of 76 cm (30 in.). If seeds are sown early enough indoors under cover the plant will flower in the first year. Once planted, the seeds should be kept warm and moist until they germinate, after which the cover can be removed.





Plant outside after all danger of frost has passed.
Preferring to exist in poor soil and drought conditions, Red Valerian will continue to flower throughout the summer and the plant will self-seed once it is well established.

Sea Holly

Latin: *Eryngium maritimum; Eryngium bourgatii*
Family: Umbelliferae/Apiaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



Increasingly common in gardens, this is a pretty plant that the tortoise can enjoy, but be careful that the sharp spines don't injure the tortoise's eyes. Sea Holly is relatively easy to grow and is best propagated from seed in pots in early spring, rather than in the ground, because its taproot makes it quite difficult to transplant.



Scatter seeds over the compost, lightly cover, water and place a polythene bag over the top until shoots appear. Grow on until all danger of frost has passed, and then plant outdoors.

Sedum

Latin: *Sedum*
Family: Crassulaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

All Sedums, with the exception of Sedum Acre, are fine to feed and plant in the tortoise enclosure. Many of the species stay green and in leaf all winter and can provide extra variety to the diet of tortoises not in hibernation.



Sedums, like all succulents, have laxative properties, so perhaps plant in a pot so it can be picked and offered, or hang over the edge of the pot and allow it to trail down, so that the tortoise can reach up to graze. Sedums are easily propagated during the summer months by taking a cutting of a leaf or stem and laying it on or just under the soil where it should root quickly.



Self-heal (Selfheal, Self Heal)

Latin: *Prunella spp.*
Family: Lamiaceae/Labiatae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

Self-heal is fine in the tortoise enclosure as ground cover, provided it is part of a varied diet. It will grow to about 5 cm (8 in.) and can become troublesome if not kept in check.



Collect seeds in late autumn and sow indoors the following spring. Thin out seedlings in the pots and plant outside in the summer.



Large clumps can be split and planted where they are to grow in autumn but smaller clumps should be overwintered in a cold frame and planted out in late spring.

Sowthistle (Sow Thistle)

Latin: *Sonchus spp.*
Family: Asteraceae/Compositae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



The Sowthistle plant may be of the common, smooth or prickly varieties and can be an annual, biennial or perennial. All varieties are a favourite with tortoises but Sowthistle can take over the garden if not kept in check.



Feeding flowers to tortoises will help keep the plant under control, but do let some go to seed to give you a continuous supply each year. Sowthistle needs very little help to grow if the seeds are planted in a sunny position in spring or summer into shallow rows in well-drained soil. Keeping the ground moist will encourage plant growth.

Speedwell

Latin: *Veronica spp.*
Family: Scrophulariaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

Speedwell only grows for a short period, and although it is not toxic it does contain tannins which have a bitter taste. If your tortoise does find it palatable, it is fine as part of a varied diet. Speedwell can be quite invasive and usually spreads by stem sections that are broken off.



Once established it's very hard to get rid of so beware if you have it growing in the lawn. The cultivated version of Speedwell, commonly known as Garden Speedwell (*Veronica longifolia*) can be grown from seed sown in autumn and planted out the following summer.



Spider Plant

Latin: *Chlorophytum comosum*
Family: Liliaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems



This easily grown plant is useful either as a houseplant or planted in the tortoise indoor enclosure where it will add variation to the tortoise's diet when weeds are scarce. Propagation of the Spider Plant can be done by division of the plant whilst repotting it. The smaller plants should be gently eased from the parent plant, leaving some roots attached and then potted up separately.



If plants produce plantlets growing on a stem, that stem can be bent over and pegged to the soil in the pot (or neighbouring pot) until plantlets develop roots, at which point the stem can be severed and individual plantlets potted up.

Sweet Woodruff

Latin: *Gallium odoratum*
Family: Rubiaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

Sweet Woodruff contains coumarin, which is toxic in high doses, and becomes potent when the leaves wilt or dry out through wind damage or old age, so only feed fresh young leaves as part of a varied diet.





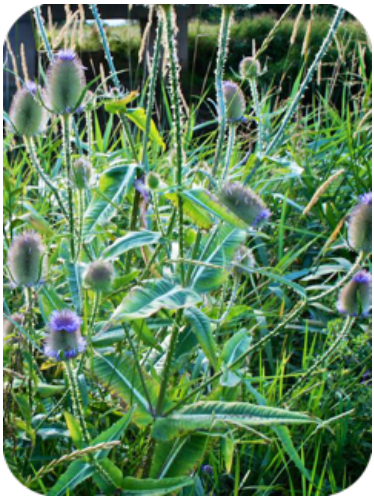
Sweet Woodruff grows to a height of 20 cm (8 in.) and the seeds can be sown in situ after they ripen in early autumn, but it really isn't one to grow in the tortoise enclosure or anywhere tortoises can gain access to whole plants.

Teasel (Teazel, Teazle)

Latin: *Dipsacus fullonum*
Family: Dipsacaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

Growing Teasel can be quite a hit-and-miss affair: if it likes the conditions you provide it will grow. Teasel likes rocky, compact soil and can grow to a height of 182 cm (6 ft) in the wild. It can be grown from seed outside in spring if planted between 3mm and 7 mm (0.1 and 0.7 in.) deep in moist soil and semi-shade where it should germinate within three weeks. If you're lucky and are able to grow Teasel, be aware that it can easily take over the garden, so to prevent this happening the Teasel heads should be removed before they set seed.





Teasel is a biennial and will only flower in the second year of growth.

Thyme (Common Thyme, Garden Thyme)

Latin: *Thymus spp.*
Family: Lamiaceae/Labiatae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

Thyme is a low-growing herb often found in the rock garden. Because of its strong aroma some tortoises will not eat Thyme, so it can be safely planted in the enclosure to provide a nice place to shelter from the sun or rain. Take cuttings from young growth in late spring. Remove the lower leaves and pinch out the growing tip from 5-10 cm (2-4 in.) shoots, dip these into rooting powder and plant in a small pot inside a clear plastic bag and keep at temps of between 18°-24°C (64°-75°F). Keep moist and you should see roots in about 3 weeks.





Violet (Sweet Violet, Dog Violet)

Latin: *Viola spp.*
Family: Violaceae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

Providing you have the right growing conditions Violet, with its sweet delicate flowers in lovely pale lilac, dark purple or white, will add a touch of colour to your garden and reward your tortoise with an early treat in the spring.





Growing to only 15 cm (6 in.) the Violet can be used as a ground cover and grows best in a moist, well-drained, rich soil in a shady position. Seeds can be planted in autumn or spring, in an unheated greenhouse or cold frame. The young plants may be potted up individually when large enough to handle, before going outside into their permanent positions in summer.

Yellow Archangel

(Yellow Deadnettle, Variegated Yellow Archangel)
Latin: *Lamium galeobdolon; Lamium galeobdolon argentatum*
Family: Lamiaceae/Labiatae
Edible Parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

Yellow Archangel is a creeping plant that grows to a height of about 0.3 m (12 in.). It can go in the tortoise enclosure, where it will provide a tasty snack and a bit of shade.



Propagate this plant by cuttings, removing the lower leaves and placing the stem in a glass of water. You should see roots in a few weeks, or seeds will disperse naturally and grow where they fall. The plant will also grow roots at joints where it creeps along the ground.



Yucca (Palm Lily, Adam's Needle, Joshua Tree)

Latin: *Yucca spp.*
Family: Agavaceae
Edible Parts: Flowers

Yucca is easy to grow and makes a nice addition to the tortoise enclosure, but is quite high in saponins, especially the roots.



The flowers are fine as a treat now and again. If your Yucca produces side shoots, these can be removed in the spring and potted up in a well-draining potting soil.

Keep warm and water well to start with, and after a month or so you should see signs of new growth, and then it can be treated the same as the parent plant.



Zinnia

Latin: *Zinnia spp.*
Family: Asteraceae/Compositae
Edible parts: Leaves, flowers and stems

These robust plants can grow to a height of 61 cm (24 in.) and come in a variety of colours. Zinnias flower from the middle of summer right through to the first frosts of the autumn.



They like a sunny position with partial shade and a rich soil, but will grow almost anywhere. Buy seeds or collect them from the parent plant when ripe and sow in trays indoors during March, covering the seeds with a thin layer of growing medium. Cover the tray to keep the seeds warm and moist, and you should have seedlings within a week. Pot the seedlings up when large enough to handle and plant outside when the last frost has passed.



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