

Talinum Triangulare, Willd., Family — Portulacacæ

A little known wonder pot-herb

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Towards the end of August 1952 a short note appeared in some of the Madras dailies from the Agricultural Department that the department was propagating and doing propaganda about new kind of spinach, *Talinum triangulare*, reported to be a very useful plant for the kitchen garden, being easily grown in the shade, and that the Director of Agriculture obtained the seeds from Ceylon, that he was growing the plant in his own garden and in some of the departmental farms in about two months. It is very interesting to see that Sri Sivaraman, the Director, has always a peculiar knack of tracing out such useful plants and encouraging their distribution to the people. This plant is fairly widely found in the West coast and is possibly introduced into our country from Ceylon and is generally known as 'Ceylon keerai'. It is also found in the neighbouring district of Coimbatore. Ochse in "Vegetables of the Dutch East Indies", mentions that the plant was introduced into Java from Surinam in 1915. Our contact with Java and Ceylon being from time immemorial, it is very likely that the plant came to India from Java directly or through Ceylon and got into the West coast. However, J. C. Willis mentions fifteen species of *Talinum* distributed in Africa, America and India. The plant is mainly propagated from cuttings and grows very fast. Though Ochse says that it demands a soil rich in humus or heavily manured, it does not seem to be fastidious about any particular soil or locality in this country. It thrives in the sun and the shade, more vigorously in the latter. The herbaceous cuttings from the stem or the top shoots, about two or three inches long, when planted in the soil easily take roots and grow. It is also propagated from seeds, though comparatively slowly, the seeds being squirted about when the fruits dehisce. After the elegant pink petals are dropped the capsules develop rapidly and burst. Hence the fruits are harvested rather early. The seeds are sown in rows and come to harvest in about six weeks. Ochse says that this is a favourite vegetable among the European in Java.

Though the departmental note talks of this as a new kind of spinach and is said to be known as *Pasali* in Tamil, unlike the real spinach, *Spinacea oleracea*, (Fam. Chenopodiaceæ), neither the juice of the plant nor the preparations from the leaves or stems are slimy in consistency. It is reported, however, that slimy nature is seen in

the plants growing in Cochin and Travancore and the plant is, therefore, not much in favour with people there. This is a matter for investigation.

The Plant: A perennial, succulent, non-fibrous, erect shrub, attaining a height of 1 - 1½ feet, very valuable as a green vegetable and a good substitute for *Amaranthus* with the same taste, flavour and even appearance in the preparations for the table, with the advantage over *Amaranthus* of being available through all times without any season and added quality of the preparations keeping well for over 24 hours. It is reported to be full of vitamins and as such of great dietary value to invalids and diabetics in need of vitamins.

Root: The tap root grows straight to about six inches in the soil. This and the side roots are tuberous and conical.

Stem: Glabrous, terete, tinged with purple, tender and easily breakable, herbaceous, succulent and branching.

Leaves: Alternate, simple, crowned at the top of the stem, ex-stipulate, decurrent along the petiole, obovate-cuneate, glabrous, green, green, above dull or feebly shining, shining below, fleshy, pinnate, emarginate; veins not prominent.

Flowers: Terminal panicles, peduncle long, trigonous, divided into 2 - 5 racemes; small flowers, purple, bisexual. *Calyx*: 2 sepals, free, green. *P.tals*: 5, purple, hypogynous, obovate. *Stamens*: numerous, anthers bilobed. *Ovary*: superior, round, one celled; style three - fid; ovules numerous, placentation free, central.

Fruit: Globose, pea-like; capsule three valved, seeds being spurted out during dehiscence; seeds globose, reniform, black and shining granular.

The Gir Breed in Madras State

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Ever since the division of India the problem of procuring good Scindhi animals from Pakistan became very difficult. While it was essential to preserve the existing Scindhi herd, the question arose whether another milch breed could be found in sufficient numbers from within the Indian Union. At the time the Sourashtra was in the throes