

WATERCRESS

Hawaiian Name: *Lēkō*

Common Names: Watercress, cress

Scientific Name: *Nasturtium officinale*

Origin: Europe, Asia

Plant Part Eaten: Leaves and stems



Locally Grown...

- Hawai'i produces about 400 tons of watercress a year.
- 95% of watercress production is on O'ahu in the 'Aiea, Pearl City, and Waipahu areas.
- 5% of production is in Ha'ikū and Kihei on Maui, with some dry land production on Hawai'i Island.
- 1% is grown hydroponically.
- Hawai'i-grown watercress has thicker and longer stems than its U.S. mainland counterparts.



Where else it's grown in the world...

California, Florida, Chile, Peru and elsewhere in South America.

Nutrition Info...



- Good sources of Vitamins A and C, which play many critical roles in the body.
- Provides calcium for strong bones.
- Phytochemicals help our vision and fight disease.
- Watercress scores a perfect 1000 on the ANDI index, which rates foods on the nutrient density.

Meet a Farmer...

Farm: Sumida Farms

Farmers: The Sumida Family

Location: 'Aiea, O'ahu



Sumida Farm was founded in 1928 and is run by siblings and third generation farmers David and Barbara Sumida. A fresh water natural spring provides the water for the farm. Surrounded by developed lands including Pearlridge mall and Kamehameha Highway, the 10 acre farm produces 70% of the watercress purchased in Hawai'i! One of the last family farms in 'Aiea, Sumida Farm also hosts school groups for fieldtrips to share their role in the food system. The film *Roots in Water* tells the story of Sumida Farm and can be found online at video.pbs.org.

In the Garden...

- Fill the container with a soil-less medium that is well draining and nutrient rich. Look for media that contains perlite and peat moss.
- Water the container from the top to saturate the media and set it on a tray filled with water to keep it wet. Watercress likes plenty of water.



- Keep the seeds wet until they sprout. Once each sprout has a full set of leaves, thin the plants so they are spaced 8 inches apart.
- Set the container into a larger container filled with 3 inches of water. This will ensure the watercress stays wet and the roots are submerged. Change the water once a week.
- If fertilizing is necessary, use a liquid 10-10-10 fertilizer at the rate recommended by the manufacturer.

Let's Get Cooking... Watercress Pesto

Ingredients

- 1/2 clove garlic
- 1/3 cup walnuts, pinenuts, or macadamia nuts
- 3 ounces watercress
- 1 cup freshly grated parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste

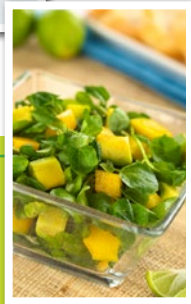
Directions

1. Place garlic, walnuts, watercress, Parmesan cheese, and olive oil into a blender or food processor.
2. Pulse until a smooth paste has formed. Add more olive oil if needed.
3. Serve with crackers, bread, or noodles.



Recipe adapted from Sumida Farms

Reminder: Please compost your food waste.



Did you know?



1. In ancient Greece, Hippocrates founded the first hospital, and grew wild watercress to treat blood disorders.
2. Captain Cook was able to circumnavigate the globe partly due to his use of watercress in the sailors' diets. It provided vitamins that prevented scurvy.
3. Watercress was recorded as being in the first Thanksgiving with the pilgrims and the Native Americans.
4. It is the most ancient of green vegetables known and can be traced back to the Persians, Greeks and Romans. Persians were known to feed watercress to their children in order to improve growth.
5. Despite its scientific name, watercress is not related to the orange and red nasturtium flowers that are often found growing in school gardens.

What can you make with watercress?

Watercress is great raw and cooked. It is often incorporated into warm, healing soups but can also be used as a salad base. It can be blended into sauces and dressings, or added to a sandwich or wrap for a peppery bite. Watercress tastes great as a pesto, or as an addition to asian noodle recipes. Try watercress salted or pickled as a refreshing side dish. It is a healthy addition to stir fries, casseroles, or stews.

Fresh Choice Hawaiian Harvest celebrates the diverse, nutritious, and delicious bounty grown in Hawai'i, encouraging children and their families to eat more locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables. The Fresh Choice Hawaiian Harvest Toolkit includes educational resource sheets, family take-home letters, produce preparation sheets, and a poster showcasing Hawai'i-grown crops. For downloads and more information, visit www.kokuahawaiifoundation.org/HawaiianHarvest.

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