LEAF

VEGETABLES

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PREFACE

The greatest single cause of disability in the developing world where 80% of the disabled live is malnutrition. The infants, children, pregnant women, and the aged are the most vulnerable. Vitamin A deficiency, the blinding malnutrition or xerophthalmia is the worse leading cause of blindness. The meager intake of protective food items such as fruits and leaf vegetables is one of the prime reasons for the above malady.

India is endowed with an array of leaf vegetables suited for tropical, subtropical and temperate climates to be grown all the year round. Among these leaf vegetables, amaranth occupies a place of pride for easiness in culture, fast growth rate, freedom from soil borne diseases, suitability to be fitted to any crop rotation scheme, favourable response to fertilizers and organic manure and above all a low production cost, affordable by poor people. Amaranth is the poor man's spinach and at the same time nutritionally very superior to tomato and cucumber.

In addition to this, a great variety of less familiar green leaf vegetables like basella, chekkurmanis, altermanthera, drumstick etc. are also used locally in different parts of the country. Besides, cool season leaf vegetables like cabbage, chinese cabbage, kale etc. are consumed by Indian people. The leaves of commonly grown tropical vegetables like cowpea, pumpkin, ashgourd and colocasia are consumed in many places. The lack of knowledge especially on the nutritive value of these vegetables among the public in general is the main drawback in their production and consumption. Thrust on growing leaf vegetables assumes importance and it needs to be given vital priority in our planning process.

An attempt has been made to give an account of nutritive value, importance in food and medicine, cultivation practices, breeding objectives and achievements, high yielding varieties and hybrids of different major and minor tropical and temperate leaf vegetables. The problems associated with the cultivation like pest and diseases occurrence and physiological disorders, post harvest handling, seed production techniques of different leaf vegetables are discussed in detail. A brief account of lesser known leaf vegetables, traditional leaf vegetables and edible leaves of some other crops are also included as the content along with colour photographs.

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