

Grow Sorrel for Chickens, Goats, Sheep and You!



I grow sorrel in my herb garden and usually give the leaves to the rabbits, or add to the dried herb mixtures. This year our sorrel pots are overflowing with the lush leaves. I have been adding it to salads, stir fry, and sauces. The French cook in me is coming out! But, in reality, I knew very little about this plant that was doing so well for us. I had to know more.

Why Grow Sorrel in Your Garden?

Sorrel, *Rumex-acetosella*, is part of the buckwheat family. People grow sorrel for the leaves and roots. When you grow sorrel, you are [cultivating a healthy herb](#) with high levels of antioxidants. Most people describe sorrel as having a lemony taste. (A different sorrel – [wood sorrel](#) looks completely different. It has clover shaped leaves and is from the oxalis

family of plants.)

Sorrel has reputedly some cancer inhibiting properties. The folk evidence points to it reducing or inhibiting cancer growth. Sorrel is added to Essiac tea to increase the antioxidant content. Unfortunately, Essiac tea is not approved or recognized yet by the US FDA as an aid in fighting cancer. For more information on the ingredients in Essiac tea and other natural anticancer and anti-inflammatory aids [check this article](#).



Sorrel is a spreading perennial plant that also does well cultivated in pots. The leaves are arrow shaped and a medium

green color. I like to grow my herbs in containers and pots so I can protect them better from our dogs and other animals. Planting in full sun about 12 inches apart will keep your sorrel plants happy. (I have heard that it will [grow in partial shade](#), too) The large leaf plant resembles spinach but in lighter green. There is also a red veined variety that I grow also. Sorrel will want to put up flower stalks and the seeds will create new green leaves soon after they fall.



Using Sorrel in Recipes

Many French cooking recipes call for sorrel as both the main ingredient and as flavoring for soups, salads and sauces. A huge handful of sorrel leaves will cook down to almost nothing, in a short time. I use it much like spinach for the most part. I love to make a big cast iron pan of stir fry and add in what ever we have at the moment. Sometimes some leftover chicken, mushrooms, squash, green or red pepper and onion with a clove or two of garlic cooked almost done, then I add the large handful of greens. Stir a few minutes until the greens are cooked, add a splash of balsamic vinegar and enjoy! Sorrel is great in this dish, and since it is still growing and my spinach has gone to seed, Sorrel and rainbow chard take their place.



Other Uses

Variations of Aioli Sauce Using Sorrel

Mix an aioli sauce in a blender. Olive oil and sorrel leaves make a tasty sauce for grilled salmon.

Add 2 or 3 garlic cloves to blender or food processor

one egg

Add 1 cup olive oil

1 tsp salt

pinch of pepper

two large handfuls of sorrel

Blend well season to taste if necessary

I plan to try this next, adding in a minced garlic clove because really, everything needs some garlic.

one cup mayonnaise -Use real mayonnaise or make your own fresh using this recipe

2 tsp grated lemon zest

One cup fresh sorrel, chopped fine

1 tsp Dijon mustard

1 Tbsp lemon juice

salt and pepper to taste

1/8 tsp of sugar

Grow Sorrel for Your Livestock and Pets

Is sorrel safe for livestock? The short answer is yes. Sorrel grows wild in meadows, and beside roadways. It grows easily and freely. I wouldn't harvest the plants from next to the road as they may have spray on them and other road dirt. You shouldn't have any problem finding sorrel growing in untreated lawns, and in wooded areas. If you have a pasture it probably is already growing there.

Chickens will enjoy a sorrel snack. It is similar to a lettuce in texture and most chickens love fresh greens. The caution with sorrel as with any green or herb high in oxalic acid, is to give in moderation. The antioxidant content is a huge health benefit to the flock.



(pin this post for later)

Sheep and goats will eat sorrel as part of their foraging and grazing. Sorrel does have a high oxalic acid content which can cause kidney stress or damage. Animals will self limit themselves on plants when they have plenty of choices to eat. If you have a healthy varied pasture, there is no need to be concerned about them eating too much sorrel. The benefits of sorrel to ruminants include the high level of antioxidants. Sorrel has an astringent benefit and is cooling for fevers and inflammation. A pulp from the leaves can be made to help heal ulcers, and skin boils.

Rabbits can eat sorrel too. Again, and as with spinach, the oxalic acid content should be considered. Used sparingly, the health benefits are a good addition to the rabbits varied diet. The same concerns apply to chard spinach, mustard greens and radish greens.



the sorrel leaves are shown bottom right of photo

Grow Sorrel for a Healthy Herb Garden

Learning more about why we should grow sorrel convinced me to continue cultivating it in my herb garden. It adds to the variety of herbal health we have available right outside the backdoor. Our human family and barnyard family benefit from the [sage](#), oregano and other [fresh herbs](#). Harvesting throughout the growing season, drying and storing the extra, gives us ready herbal treatments through the year.

Do you grow sorrel? What herbs help you keep your animals and human family members healthy?

