



***Moringa oleifera* leaves for nutrition, health, healthy soils, animals, soap and clean water**

The moringa tree *Moringa oleifera* is an amazing tree. It is sometimes called the “miracle tree” – but not many people realise what a remarkable tree it is.

Originally from India, it is now found all over Sub-Saharan Africa. *Moringa stenopetala*, the African moringa, is native to Ethiopia and Kenya and has very similar properties.

I recommend that you plant and use *Moringa oleifera*, for many reasons:

- It is fast-growing, it grows well in degraded soil and it is drought-resistant – this is important because of the climate crisis.
- It is a legume – meaning it fixes nitrogen into the soil. This means it is a fertilizer tree and excellent for inter-cropping, as other plants benefit from the nitrogen.
- The leaves are very nutritious. It is therefore very beneficial to have a moringa tree in the garden at times when food is in short supply.



Leaves and flowers of Moringa oleifera

Nutrition

The leaves contain proteins, minerals and vitamins. They are VERY nutritious. They include all the nine essential amino acids, i.e. the proteins that cannot be produced in the body and must be taken as food. The minerals include calcium, potassium and iron. Moringa is said to be the most nutritious plant on the planet! As such, it is extremely helpful with malnourished children, pregnant women, breast feeding mothers and people living with HIV/AIDS.

In daily use, moringa leaves may be eaten as a vegetable. Cook the leaves very lightly – only for one or two minutes. The leaves may also be used (and stored) as moringa leaf powder.

To make moringa leaf powder: Harvest the leaves, rinse in salt water, hang them to dry on strings in a well-ventilated room and collect the fallen leaves on a clean sheet (or use a solar drier). When very dry, pound the leaves, sieve and pack in dark, airtight containers.



Ladies in Congo sieving moringa leaf powder

For good health and a strong immune system, scatter a teaspoonful of moringa leaf powder on your food twice a day.

Moringa leaf powder may also be used to make a delicious cold drink. The drink may contain moringa, cinnamon and ginger. The addition of hibiscus and/or beetroot lends a very rich colour to the drink. One of the following fruits may also be added to give a range of flavours; mango, banana, jack fruit or pineapple. This drink tastes better than any soda and is 100 times healthier!

Moringa powder may also be taken as tea. Please take care, however, if you already have very low blood pressure – moringa tea may reduce the blood pressure rapidly.

Moringa as medicine

Diabetes and high blood pressure: Moringa leaf powder is highly recommended for both complaints – which often occur together. The recommended dose: Twice a day, mix one tablespoonful of moringa leaf powder into the food and eat 2 moringa seeds.

For deep cuts, George Zokli in Ghana recommends putting a poultice of leaves on the cut. This was his experience: He walked through a glass door and had very deep wounds on his leg. He wrapped a poultice of fresh moringa leaves that had been washed in salt water around the cuts. After 5 days he removed the poultice and a piece of glass fell out with the poultice. He made a fresh poultice of moringa leaves. The wound healed in two weeks with no sign of infection.



This tree was coppiced – you can see how many new shoots grew where the tree was cut. But the shoots should have been cut as well. If the tree grows too high you cannot harvest the leaves.

Soap for skin complaints

Make moringa soap: With moringa soap one can treat a wide range of skin problems. For information about how to make moringa soap, watch the excellent video on this page of the Ghana Permaculture Institute website:

<https://permacultureghana.wordpress.com/the-solutions/moringa-soap/>

In Agriculture

What is good for people is often also good for animals! Goats, cows, pigs, rabbits and chickens thrive when fresh moringa leaves are added to their food.

For soil improvement, moringa can be grown as an agroforestry tree. Alternatively, plant moringa close together – at intervals of 20cm. You can start harvesting two months after sowing. After one year the young plants can be dug or ploughed in.

For harvesting, cut the branches of the tree regularly. The more you cut, the more shoots you get and the more leaves.



Young children at the Njuruta Regeneration Farm at the Tiriji Eco Center in Kenya preparing to plant moringa seedlings.

Water purification

Dirty water from holes in the ground can be purified with moringa seeds, but not river water in which soap or washing powder has been used. Pound 10 dry moringa seeds to a fine powder, add to a bucket of water and stir vigorously. Perhaps immediately, or perhaps within 3 or 4 hours, the water will clarify. It is amazing to see it happen!

I wish you good health and positive development in your community,
Keith Lindsey