Sorrel, Garden—*Rumex acetosa* L.¹

James M. Stephens²

Garden or common sorrel is a close relative of rhubarb. Sometimes it is referred to as dock. However, the term “dock” has been used in Britain to include all members of the family Polygonaceae. Owing to its tart flavor, it is sometimes called sour dock and sour grass. In fact, sorrel derives from *surele*, which is French for “sour.”

**Description and Use**

Garden sorrel is a perennial plant with long, pointed, reddish green leaves that are sometimes eaten as a potherb and in a salad. It resembles curly dock, a common weed found in Florida and elsewhere. Both types have a many seeded central flowering stalk surrounded by wavy, pointed, slender leaves. The root persists season after season, but is not used as a vegetable.

**Culture**

Sorrel has been grown successfully in Florida gardens. Sow seeds in the fall and spring. Then thin plants to a spacing of 6 to 8 inches apart in rows spaced 2 feet apart. Established plants may be divided and the divisions reset to increase the planting. Soil preparation and plant care are similar to those for most other vegetables. While the whole plant may be harvested at once, the usual method is to remove leaves one at a time as needed.

---

1. This document is HS669, one of a series of the Horticultural Sciences Department, UF/IFAS Extension. Original publication date May 1994. Revised September 2015. Visit the EDIS website at [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu).

2. James M. Stephens, professor emeritus, Horticultural Sciences Department, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville FL 32611.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is an Equal Opportunity Institution authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations. For more information on obtaining other UF/IFAS Extension publications, contact your county's UF/IFAS Extension office. U.S. Department of Agriculture, UF/IFAS Extension Service, University of Florida, IFAS, Florida A & M University Cooperative Extension Program, and Boards of County Commissioners Cooperating. Nick T. Place, dean for UF/IFAS Extension.