

## **Cactus Care and Cooking**

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Some folks I work with here at 3TV have asked me recently about problems they are having with cactus. And I'll tell you what I told them: Most problems with cactus stem from too much water. Most people tend to overwater, but it's also possible that the soil is not draining well enough and the roots of the cactus are just sitting in water.

You have to remember that cactus are desert plants. They are used to arid, dry conditions and, in fact, they favor them.

If there is too much water, a rot can form (known as phytophthora). For transplanting cactus, add a little powdered sulfur (or soil sulfur if you can't find the powdered stuff) to the soil as you plant. It will help the roots establish.

So to solve 99 percent of cactus ailments, reduce your watering and making sure the soil is well drained.

And while I'm talking about desert plants, I'd like to mention the edible kind. There are a lot of desert plants you can use in your cooking, or you can use to survive if you're stuck in the desert.

Bon appetit.

### **Purslane**

Purslane can be eaten fresh, cooked in stews or soups, boiled or steamed. It can even be dried for future use. The following is a recipe for a great salad:

1 cup purslane stems or leaves

½ sliced onion

1 cup diced tomato

½ cup cilantro

Combine together and enjoy!

### **Tumbleweed**

Young raw tumbleweed tips can be chopped and eaten with salads. They can also be steamed, boiled or sautéed. They are great in omelets. Here is a great recipe for creamed tumbleweed:

6 biscuits

1 cup tumbleweed, chopped

1 Tbsp. butter

2 Tbsp. flour

1 cup milk

A pinch of basil

Salt and pepper to taste

First steam the tumbleweed for 5 to 10 minutes. Then melt the butter in a pan and slowly stir in the flour. Gradually add milk and lower the heat. Continue to stir until thickened. Season the sauce with basil, salt and pepper. Drain the tumbleweed and add to the sauce. Serve over sliced biscuits.

Prickly pear

You can eat the pads and the fruit of the prickly pear. The fruit (known as tunas) can be eaten raw or made into a juice by peeling the outer skin of 24 tunas (its easier to peel them if you boil them first). Then strain the seeds and mix 1 cup of sugar and a quart of water, chill and enjoy!

The pads (known as nopales) can be used in many wonderful recipes. The following are just a few of many.

Nopales Salsa

Over a newspaper, carefully remove the thorns by scraping the pads with a knife. Cube the pads and bring to a gentle boil. Strain the pads and then put in fresh water bringing back to a gentle boil. While boiling add cubed pads. Boil for 15 minutes. Strain and serve with corn chips.

Mesquite

Boil pods or eat raw.

Yucca

You can eat the flower petals raw or boil fruit for 10 minutes. Slice and serve with butter.