

# My Lovely Sneaky Betel Leaf

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**Latin Name: '*Piper sarmentosum*'**

**Common names: Pepper leaf, Betel Leaf, Wild Pepper, Kadok, Vegetable Pepper...to name a few!**

Not to be mixed up with 'Betel Nut' which is often called Piper Betel (just to be confusing!) This is often used as a stimulant drug and a member of the palm family of plants, it's use is discouraged in Queensland.

Family: Piperaceae.

Also in this plant family is common kitchen pepper 😊

## ID

An attractive heart shaped, dark green, very glossy leaf that can be palm sized when mature. It can be an upright plant to about a meter or a scrambling vine, the habitat it lives in will determine how it looks.

The flower is a small white cluster that pops out of the top of the plant.



### **Habit ~ Its delightfully sneaky!**

It's a fast growing scrambling plant that loves to take over beds, invade natural places, especially gullies and smother smaller weaker plants. It might look innocent like it's not doing much, but it's being sneaky and sending out creeping underground runners, that will pop up in an area where you never remember planting it, the runners can be several meters in length.....so be aware where you plant it, for the bushlands sake please keep it contained if you can, a large pot or tub is sufficient to grow enough for the Kitchen needs.

When contained it will grow upright to about a meter or so tall, clumping out from the main plant, it will be sending runners but they will hit the side of the pot and grow upwards to produce a fairly upright, dense, multi stemmed plant.....they will also pop out of the hole in the bottom of your pot! (so sneaky!)

### **Flavour ~ my interpretation !**

Fresh I has a totally unique flavour, kind-off spicy and floral that changes in strength depending on the time of the year and water content of the plant. Dried it has a much more tobacco, smoky kinda smell and taste and it makes a really interesting flavoured tea that has all of the above flavours in it.

I LOVE it. Try it for yourself 😊



Escape artists aka: runners



## Propagation and care

Prop by division. It's easy to propagate and share with friends. Full sun or partial shade, I've seen it happily growing in deep shade but the plants was much more 'vine' like as it scrambled to find the light. I suggest full sun for a healthier plant with big fat leaves.

It'll propagate itself from your compost heap, easily surviving a cool compost so if you need to dispose of it, drown it and use it as a tonic for your garden or bin it.....or dry/freeze it to store it for another day.

I literally NEVER water mine it's in a raised bed (my beastly is contained) with mature soil and just kinda gets on with life in there. However I have noticed that recently with the exponential rain we've had my plant has gone nuts with huge leaves and masses and masses of new growth in all directions, this suggest that it actually would be a happier plant if it was watered regularly. Don't forget it's sneaky, pretty tough to kill, and wants to take over.

## Common Uses

It's native to Vietnam and Thailand, used extensively all through Malaysia as common salad herb, also for wrapping rice balls and used for presentation of food platters, also a common tonic tea.

## Medicinal uses ~ I am not a practitioner!

It's main general use today is as a mild stimulant and digestive aid, a tea made from fresh leaves is said to be a general tonic for the gut. All parts of the plant can be used in some way and it does have a traditional history of use as a treatment for arthritis, joint pain, toothache, and headache, also to provide relief from asthma.

Refs: Book: Isabell Shipard, 'How can I use herbs in my daily life?'

Web: Fair Dinkum Seeds [Betel Pepper Leaf Piper Sarmentosum Rooted Cuttings | Fair Dinkum Seeds](#)