

KATUK (*Sauropus androgynus*)

Katuk is a staple vegetable in Borneo where it grows as an understory tree in the lowland rainforests.

Soil: reported to tolerate acid soils, our soil is circum-neutral and they like it. We recommend lime just in case.

Water: probably needs plenty, can tolerate brief flooding.

Sun: Prefers shade, but can probably tolerate full sun if given plenty of water.

Cold: Will freeze in the winter, but should come back from the stump.

Pruning: keep pruned to 3-6 feet tall.

Propagation: easily propagated by cuttings of older wood stems. Strip the leaves and stick it in the ground in the shade. It probably needs cross pollination to produce seeds and all our plants are clones of one individual.

Pests: none known.

Other problems: tends to grow tall and lanky and then fall over. Growth slows in the winter and the taste is poor until it resumes vigor with warm weather.

Harvesting and preparation: The leaves and flowers have a pea like flavor. According to www.echotech.org it should probably be cooked, though it is also eaten raw. In Borneo, it is often fertilized and irrigated under shade to produce fast growing tips that are very similar to asparagus. *"It has a pleasant peanut-like taste when eaten raw and the cooked leaves taste excellent as spinach. The plant is sold everywhere in Malaysia and nearby countries, where it is grown as an edible hedge. Malaysian scientists have developed a technique for forcing the shoot tips to grow extra long and tender by applying plenty of manure, water and (sometimes) shade. The 5-inch shoot tips (locally called "sayor manis") are sold to upscale restaurants and also exported to Japan, and possibly elsewhere, as "tropical asparagus." I ate these in a hotel in Malaysia and they were outstanding. The chef stir-fried them for one minute."* (www.echotech.org)

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