Common name Chameleon leaf, Dokudami, Fishmint, Fishwort, Heartleaf

Latin name and Family *Houttuynia cordata* Saururaceae

**Botanical description** *Houttuynia cordata* is a [herbaceous](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herbaceous) [perennial plant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perennial_plant) growing to 20–80 cm (7.9–31.5 in). The proximal part of the stem is trailing and produces [adventitious roots](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adventitious_root), while the distal part of the stem grows vertically. The [leaves](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leaf) are alternate, broadly heart-shaped, 4–9 cm (1.6–3.5 in) long and 3–8 cm (1.2–3.1 in) broad. [Flowers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flower), growing usually in summer, are greenish-yellow, borne on a terminal spike 2–3 cm (0.79–1.18 in) long with four to six large white basal [bracts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bract).

**Location** Native to Asia but widely grown as an ornamental in other parts of the world and viewed as an invasive species in the US. There are two chemotypes of the plant; The Southeast Asian chemotype has similar constituents to cilantro or coriander whilst the Japanese one has a citrusy aroma which some consider orangey or gingery or similar to lemon myrtle. It is used as a culinary herb added to soups stir fries salads and pickles or used to make a tea. ; in south China they also use the root as a vegetable although I have not tried that yet.

**Part used** Whole plant, leaves

**Cultivation/Harvesting** Hardy perennial which prefers moist to wet soil or shallow water in partial shade. It is most easily propagated by division. The whole plant or the leaves are cut throughout the growing season.

**History/Folklore/Taste/Energetics**

Some people view it as an invasive weed because it is able to spread rapidly with its rhizomes. I prefer to see it as a rather beautiful plant which makes wonderful food and has and amazing range of abilities as a healing ally and potential to treat so many illnesses. Pungent and colling

**Constituents** Flavonoids, alkaloids, polyphenols, essential oil, Fatyy acids quercitrin (25) and quercetin-3-O-beta-D-galactopyranoside named as houttuynoside A (1) and houttuynamide

**Actions**

* Antivral
* Diuretic
* Urinary tonic
* Antioxidant
* Pectoral (lung tonic)
* Antihistamine
* Antibacterial
* Immunomodulant
* Balances blood sugars

**Traditional and current uses**

* It is effective against various viruses (including herpes viruses) and bacteria
* It is a lung tonic, healing lung abnormalities and treating pneumonia and SARS and coronavirus
* Effective against leukeamia
* It is a diuretic and urinary tonic,
* Full of antioxidants (polyphenols which reduce the effects of free radicals thus reducing aging, preventing cancer and many other degenerative conditions)
* Helps remove toxins
* Effective at treating obesity
* It can help reduce environmental sensitivities and inhibits histamine release and responses (including asthma and eczema apparently)
* Reduces swelling
* This wonderful herb helps balance the intestinal flora and supports the immune system
* It can also help to regulate blood sugars and treat diabetes
* Used externally for snake bites and skin problems

**Recipes and Formulae**

The leaves are used in Vietnamese cooking to garnish fish stew and boiled duck eggs. They can also be added to stir fries andchopped into salads.

**Culinary use**

See also: [Zhe'ergen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhe%27ergen" \o "Zhe'ergen)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Houttuynia_roots_vegetable_china.jpg)

It is grown as a [leaf vegetable](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leaf_vegetable" \o "Leaf vegetable), particularly in Vietnam, where it is called *giấp cá* or *diếp cá*, and is used as a fresh herbal garnish. The leaf has an unusual taste that is often described as 'fishy' (earning it the nickname "fish mint"), so it is not enjoyed as universally as basil, mint, or other more commonly used herbs.

In northeastern India, particularly Meghalaya, it is locally known as *ja myrdoh* and used in salads or cooked with other vegetables. In [Manipur](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manipur" \o "Manipur), it is known as *toningkok* and used as garnish over *[eromba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eromba" \o "Eromba)* and *[singju](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Singju" \o "Singju)*, ethnic side dishes. In Garo, it is known as *matcha duri,* the leaves used raw as salad leaf, or ground (usually the tender roots) with dry fish, chillies and tamarind into chutneys. In Assam (Assamese) it is called "Masunduri" and popular mostly among the tribes. It is taken raw as salad and cooked along with fish as fish curry.

In the southwestern Chinese provinces of [Yunnan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yunnan" \o "Yunnan), [Guizhou](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guizhou), [Chongqing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chongqing),and [Sichuan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sichuan" \o "Sichuan), the roots are used as a [root vegetable](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Root_vegetable" \o "Root vegetable) and are known as *[Zhe'ergen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhe%27ergen" \o "Zhe'ergen)* (折耳根). The leaves are also consumed.

In Japan, the beverage *dokudami cha* ([Japanese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_language): ドクダミ茶; literally "*Houttuynia cordata* tea") is made from the dried leaves.