

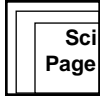
ALACHE Teaching Tips



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Youth will be able to:

- * Identify alache.
- * Explain how to grow and harvest alache.
- * Describe how alache is traditionally grown and used.
- * Research alache recipes.



HOW TO USE THE ALACHE SCIENCE PAGE

Alache grows in the wild throughout the warmer parts of the Americas. It is found in a few scattered sites in Arizona and Texas. Although still used as edible greens, especially in Mexico and Central America, it is becoming less popular. You can sometimes find it being cultivated by Latinos in community gardens as far north as New York City.

Point out alache growing in the garden or show some alache that has been harvested. Ask youth if they know what it is. Youth from Latin American countries may be familiar with alache, but they may know it by a different common name. The name alache or alanche is what it is called in the Puebla region of Mexico. Other common names include anoda (Puerto Rico), aguatosa (Oaxaca), violeta (Huastec), limete ts'ohool (Huastec for "bottle plant"), pax'tamac, tasa wich (Huastec for "glass flower"), and tsayaltsay (Maya). Among some other common names used by native people in Mexico and Central America are: altea, amapola morada, amapolita, amapolita del campo, bioleta, camanilla morada, estrella, malva cienegera, and malva de castilla. Point out to youth that no matter where they are in the world, alache has the same scientific name, *Anoda cristata*. Ask: Why do you think it is useful to give scientific names to plants and other living things? (Answer: This prevents a lot of confusion. When botanists or

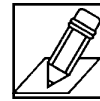
gardeners use the scientific name for alache, they understand exactly what plant it is, no matter where they come from or what language they speak.)

In the southern and midwestern United States, alache is a weed in soybean and corn fields. Farmers in those areas know it by the common name spurred anoda. Ask: How can alache be a multi-purpose plant in Mexico and a weed in the United States? (Answer: A "weed" is just a plant that is growing where it is not wanted. Any plant can be considered a weed if it is growing where it is not wanted. It grows in corn fields in Mexico, but farmers there use it for many purposes.)

After youth have read the Science Page, ask: Why is alache called a multi-purpose plant? What are some ways it is used? (Answer: as a green vegetable, an herb, a medicine, and animal food). If some of the youth are familiar with alache, ask them to discuss what they know about it—how it is used in cooking, and how else they might have seen it used. Explain that it has a variety of uses in different parts of Latin America. In some parts of Mexico, it is mainly used in soups and stews. In other areas of Mexico, it is used to flavor tamales and mole sauce. It also has a variety of medicinal uses, including for coughs, hair loss, stomach inflammation, poor appetite, fever, measles, and deafness. Point out that the effectiveness of alache as a medicine has not been researched by scientists. A word of caution: *Tell youth that plants should not be used for medicinal purposes without the recommendation of a doctor.*

Explain that in Central America alache used to be considered famine food. If corn crops failed, then farmers could rely on alache and other edible greens for food. The consumption of alache and other edible greens has decreased in recent years because European

vegetables are considered more prestigious.



ALACHE LETTER TILES

When the tiles are unscrambled, the message is "Alache is a multi-purpose plant."



SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

The source for this information is: Rendon, B. et al. (see reference section below).

Explain that ethnobotany is an exciting career that combines ethnology (the study of different cultures) and botany (the study of plants). Ethnobotanists learn a lot about plants from native people. They also learn about people from studying the plants they grow.



REFERENCES

Here are some useful references on alache:

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Turrill, W.B. 1956. Curtis's Botanical Magazine. Volume CLXXI. Tab. 288. The Royal Horticultural Society, London, UK.