

JEWELS OF OPAR

Flameflower, Pink Baby's Breath, Ceylon Spinach

Talinum paniculatum

Portulacaceae

ECHO® PLANT INFORMATION SHEET

Description

Native to tropical America, this plant can now be found throughout much of the tropics. Jewels of Opar is an erect, herbaceous, perennial ground cover or low shrub that can reach a height of 1 m. The leaves are alternate, simple, and succulent. The self-pollinated flowers are small with 5 pink or red/reddish purple petals. They result in round fruiting capsules that are 3-5mm in diameter that contain 1 mm long black, shiny seeds. The roots are swollen and tuberous.

Uses

The young shoots and leaves are eaten in stews and soups, or raw in salads. Used in folk medicine for a wide range of ailments. It is also used extensively as an ornamental.

Common Names

- French
 - les bijoux d'ophar
 - gros poupier
- Spanish
 - Língua De Vaca

Cultivation

- **Elevation** – up to 2200 m
- **Rainfall** – grows in moist areas but is also drought tolerant
- **Soil Types** – prefers well-drained soil with high organic matter
- **Temperature Range** – grows in warm weather; intolerant of frost
- **Day Length Sensitivity** – not a significant factor
- **Light** – prefers full sun but can grow under partial shade

Seed germination occurs within seven days of planting and young plants should be transplanted after five weeks. Cuttings from the semi-woody stems can be planted with tops; they require watering. Aim for about 5 plants per square meter.

Harvesting and Seed Production

Leaves can be picked eight to nine weeks after seed sowing, or as soon as five to six weeks after planting cuttings. They can be continuously harvested over a long season. Jewels of Opar does not bolt, so it is a source of leafy greens far longer than many vegetables. Flower inflorescences should be removed often to continue abundant leaf growth. For seed multiplication, the seeds should be harvested when fruits darken and are dry on the plant. Regular harvesting and planting in containers or other enclosed spaces are ways to mitigate against weediness.

Pests and Diseases

It is largely pest free.

Cooking and Nutrition

Leaves are tasty eaten raw and are only slightly mucilaginous. Do not consume large quantities of uncooked leaves, as *Talinum* species contain oxalic acid. Can be added to cooked dishes as spinach or mustard green substitute. Leaves remain tender and mild flavored throughout the growing season.

References

Fern, K. [Tropical Plants Database](#)

Mosango, M. 2004. *Talinum paniculatum (Jacq.) Gaertn.* [Internet] Record from PROTA4U. Grubben, G.J.H. and Denton, O.A. (Editors). PROTA (Plant Resources of Tropical Africa)

[Southern Exposure Seed Exchange](#)

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