

INTRODUCTION

Fiji has an abundance of very highly nutritious fruits and vegetables. Herbs are better known for their medicinal properties. There are many resilient varieties for the dry and wet regions in Fiji.

Fiji is gripped with a crisis of non-communicable diseases and malnutrition related challenges. 80% of children below the age of two are anaemic and so is almost half of Fiji's population.

This is attributed to consumption of highly processed foods. If families have access to gardens with diverse crops, they could be preparing preparing 'and consuming' more nutritious foods and be healthier.

We encourage growing of 9 x 9 gardens which means growing nine types of nine varieties of fruits, leafy vegetables, herbs, cucurbits, grains, beans, other vegetables, root vegetable and staples. This means that your garden will have a diverse range of foods that you can harvest to feed your family a wide range of tasty, healthy foods of different flavours and texture.

Most of the crop varieties are resilient. Seeds and seedlings are readily available for most local crops and can be easily sourced to have a diverse range of crops around your homes!

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VEGETABLES

Vegetables are parts of plants that are consumed by humans or other animals as food. The original meaning is still commonly used and is applied to plants collectively to refer to all edible plant matter.

These include Cucurbits, leafy vegetables, root vegetables, other vegetables and pulses.

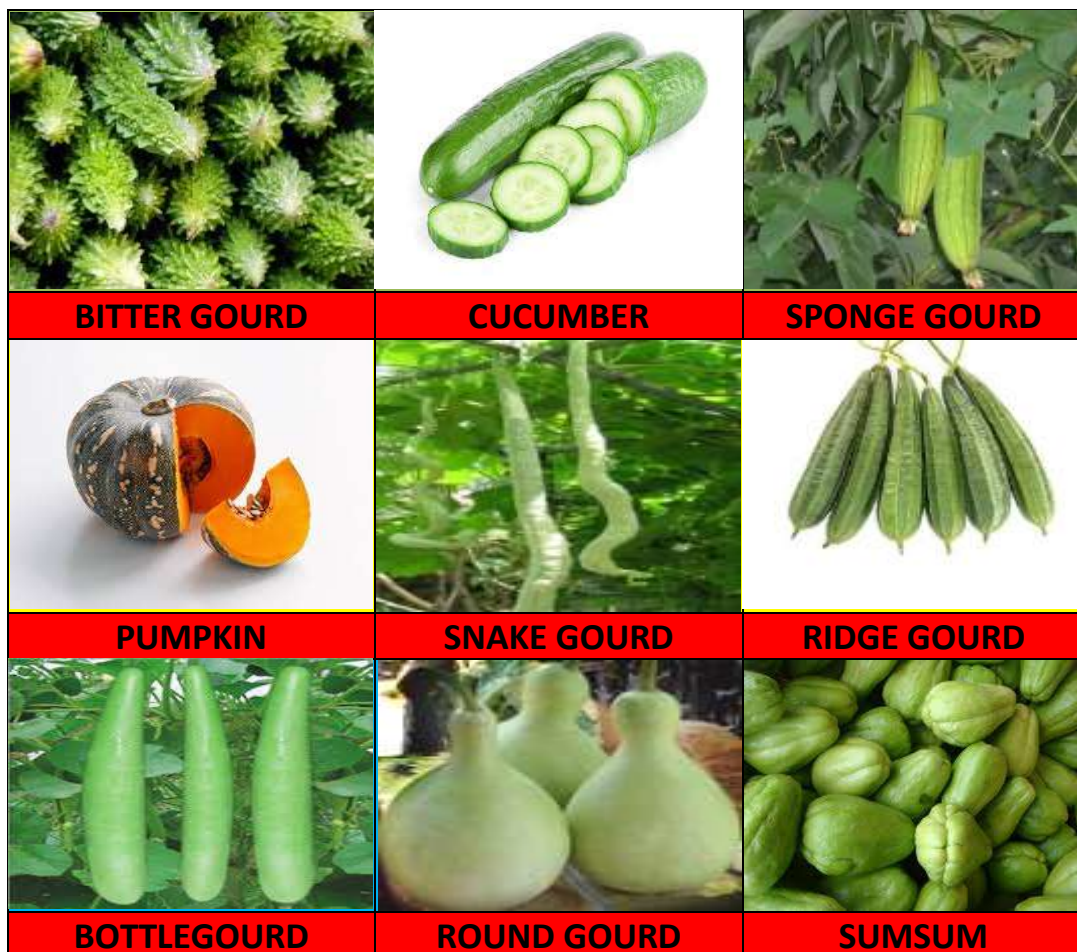
CUCURBITS

There is a wide range of cucurbits growing in Fiji that have high nutritional values.

These are versatile crops that fit well with various local authentic cultural dishes.

Many of these can grow on tresses or climb fences/ trees requiring little land spaces.

Various types of gourds are versatile and can be used in stews, stir-fries, soups and salads. Pumpkin varieties are many and when harvested ripe can be stored in cool dry place for up to 9 months and is great for food security. Here are nine cucurbits one can grow though there are many more varieties that can be planted around home gardens.



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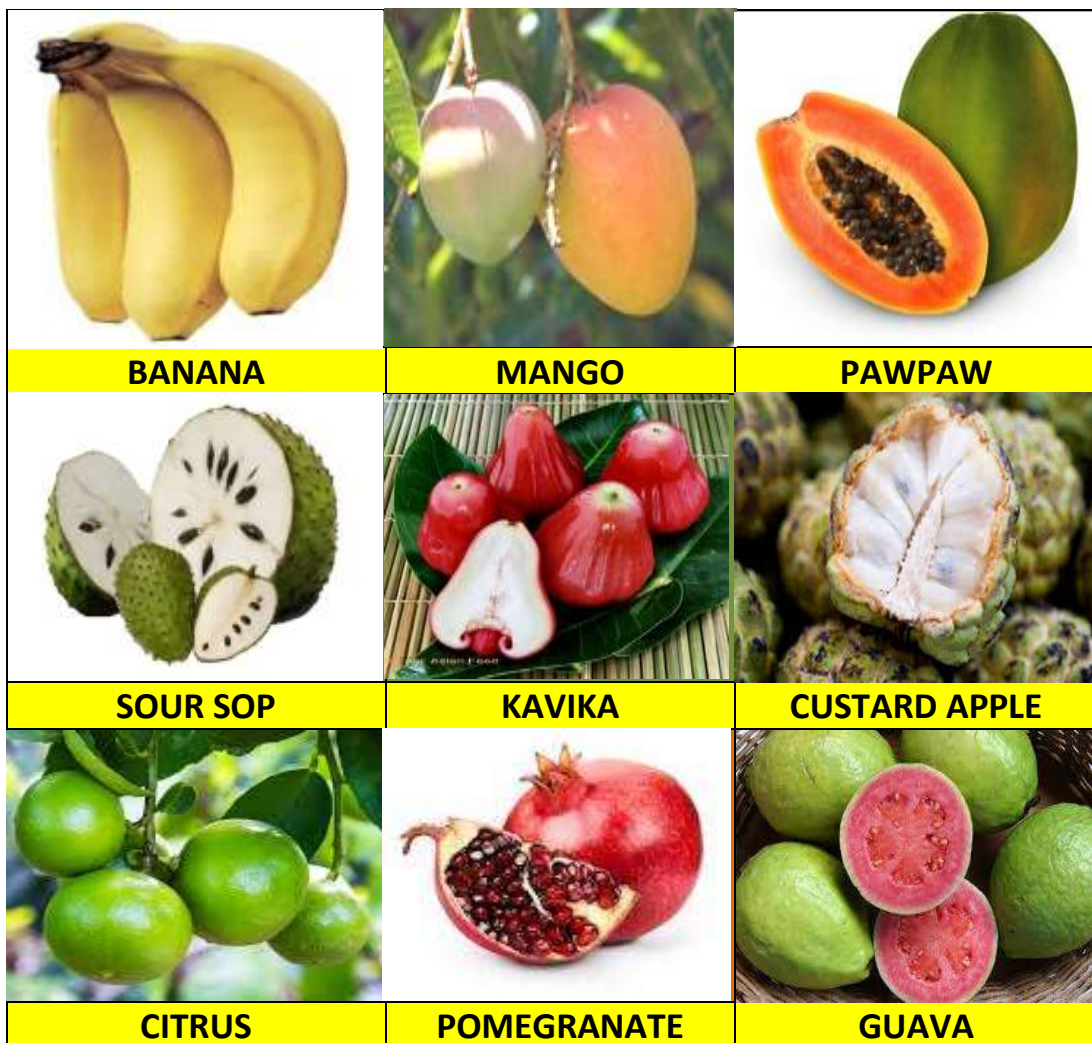


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FRUITS

To build strong immune systems we need fruits rich in vitamins and minerals growing around Fiji. Where there is limited land, papaya, banana, pomegranate, citrus and passionfruit can be grown. Seeds of these fruits germinate easily and can be saved and easily planted. If there is space varieties of mangoes, citrus, coconuts etc. can be grown to ensure there are fruits each season. Herbs and spices can be added to green fruits (pawpaw, mango etc.) to make interesting and tasty salads which can be served with meals.



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GRAINS AND PULSES

Grains are high value crops that can be used as a staple. In Fiji common grains used are wheat in form of flour and rice. Both are often available bleached and low in nutrition content due to need for shelf life and preservation. These can be supplemented or replaced with seeds of Moca [amaranthus] added in wraps/roti's, soups and salads and so can be the range of maize, range of basil seeds and easily grown pulses.



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HERBS

To enhance taste of our foods a range of naturally growing herbs could be used. Delicious flavouring herbs like lemon grass are resilient plants that grow easily and need little care. Food can also be flavoured with lemon leaves and mother of all herbs that grow in the wild and are resilient plants. Herbs grown in backyard gardens can be used to flavour foods and reduce the use of sauces and other bottled seasonings which may be high in salt, fat and contain artificial flavours and preservatives.



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BEANS/PULSES

Pulses are high protein, are great for soil as nitrogen fixing plants and require little space in your backyards. They are also great for combination planting. Wing beans, broad beans, flat beans have longer life, require little care and bear most of the year. Mung and urd beans grow well in dry regions and a few pigeon pea plants could provide green beans for salads and stews and dried beans for lentil soups for the whole year.



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LEAFY VEGETABLES

Most edible leafy vegetables growing easily around Fiji, are high in vitamins (e.g. Vitamin A) and minerals (e.g. iron)

Superfoods like moringa [Saijan] can be planted once, kept short if you have limited space and can provide leafy vegetables for years to come, so can Malabar spinach as well taro leaves and bele. Pumpkin, cassava and kumala leaves can also be used as green leafy vegetables. They are also great for salads, soups, stews. Fenugreek, mustard, amaranthus seeds are readily available for short term crops. Utilise a wide variety of leafy vegetables in as many meals a day as possible.



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OTHER VEGETABLES

In small backyard spaces a wide range of other vegetables can add diversity for each meal. Two or three eggplant could provide fruits for the whole year so can wild cherry tomatoes resilient to all weather. Jackfruit, green pawpaw & rosella belongs to fruit family but can be served as vegetable dishes. Chillies could provide added taste and so can sour tasting rosella that could provide leaves and fruits for great tastes throughout the year.

		
TOMATO	EGGPLANT	JACK FRUIT
		
DURUKA	OTA	OKRA / BHINDI
		
GREEN PAWPAW	ROSELLA FRUIT/LEAVES	SAIJAN FRUIT

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ROOT VEGETABLES

Many root vegetables like turmeric grow in the wild and can be nurtured in backyards for its curcumin and antioxidant properties. We also grow layalaya and ginger. Shorter term crops like garlic, onions, radish and beetroot also grow well around Fiji.

		
ONION	GARLIC	SWEET POTATO / KUMALA
		
CARROT	WHITE RADDISH	RED RADDISH
		
TUMERIC	BEET ROOT	GINGER

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STAPLES (STARCHY FRUITS & ROOT CROPS)

For urban and rural backyards, plantain and breadfruit can be easily grown and will be an important staple food in the family diet for a very long time.

Kumala or sweet potatoes are short term crops and a few mounds can provide quicker returns. Giant swamp taro or Via is a recognised staple for food security and so is dalo ni tana that is a very resilient crop.

		
CASSAVA	VUDI	YAMS
		
DALO NI TANA	DALO	BREADFRUIT
		
VIA	KUMALA	KAWAI

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EXAMPLES OF HOUSEHOLD GARDENS THAT FOLLOWED 9 x 9 MODEL



Model of 9 x 9 backyard garden in Vakabuli. Salote Bainivalu from Vakabuli received the best food security backyard garden award. She planted the following in her backyard; tomato, maize, cassava, eggplant, tulsi, basil, long bean, cowpeas, poi leaves, banana, vudi, mandarin, saijan, bele, rourou leaves, dalo, breadfruit, pawpaw, pigeon pea, lettuce, flat bean, coconut.



Model of 9 x 9 backyard garden in Vakabuli. Luisa Deitu from Naviyago Village received the best backyard garden award. She planted the following in her backyard; tomato, maize, cassava, eggplant, tulsi, green basil, long bean, cowpeas, poi leaves, banana, vudi, mandarin, saijan, bele, rourou leaves, dalo, breadfruit, pawpaw, pigeon pea, lettuce, flat bean, lemon grass.

Success Story

Vani Rokosere who is a diabetic patient and an amputee was awarded with the most diverse backyard gardens plaque. In one of her interviews with our field officer she mentioned that the backyard garden has allowed her to stay active and be able to supply her family with healthy meals. Her physical condition does not stop her from gardening and thus through her positive attitude, she was able to encourage other women in her village. She also mentioned that the backyard garden has improved their financial health and thus her children & grandchildren are benefiting from it. Backyard gardening project has made them realize the negative impact of buying processed foods from the shop. As an attendee of the many trainings conducted by FRIEND, she was able to persuade her children to enhance their garden so they may buy less food from the shop and eat more diversified healthy nutritious home prepared meals.

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