

**The series:** This brochure is the 7<sup>th</sup> in a series of 10 linking wild foods in Lao PDR to nutrients essential for public health. Each issue focuses on a single nutrient, highlighting wild species that contribute to its dietary intake:

Macronutrients	Vitamins	Minerals
1. Energy	3. Vitamin A	<b>7. Iron</b>
2. Protein	4. Vitamin B1	8. Zinc
	5. Vitamin B9	9. Potassium
	6. Vitamin C	10. Calcium

**Objective:** To provide health professionals, extension officers, and nutrition educators with practical information on the role and potential of wild foods in addressing nutrient deficiencies in local diets in rural communities.

**Structure:** Each brochure contains the following parts: (a) Overview of the nutrient’s importance for general health or specific groups, such as children or pregnant women. (b) Brief description of selected wild food species that contribute to the intake of the nutrient. (c) One or two cooking recipes per species to encourage dietary integration.

**Additional resources:** QR codes link to the Pha Khao Lao Platform ([www.phakhaolao.la](http://www.phakhaolao.la)) for detailed species profiles and recipes.

**Data sources:** Species were selected using AI-aided literature analysis (cross-validated with ChatGPT & DeepSeek). Species categorisation (high – medium – low) was done using Mistral LLM. This data is preliminary. All nutritional data will be reassessed through laboratory analyses in the AFN II project. Species and recipe information were sourced from Pha Khao Lao.

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# Wild Foods and Nutrition

## Iron

### Why your body needs Iron



**Healthy blood:** helps your body make red blood cells that carry oxygen from your lungs to all parts of your body. Lack of iron makes you feel tired, weak, or dizzy.



**Strong immune system:** supports your immune system, helping your body fight off infections and stay healthy.



**Brain development:** especially important for children and pregnant women. It helps with brain development and learning.



**Energy and growth:** gives energy and helps grow strong. It is important for everyone, especially women, children, and teenager.

### Iron in Wild Foods in Lao PDR

Wild plants like moringa, water spinach, bamboo shoots, and wild mushrooms, as well as animals like snails, crickets, and small fish, provide iron that helps keep your blood and body healthy. In the next pages, you will find a selection of wild food species and a few recipes showing how you can prepare them.

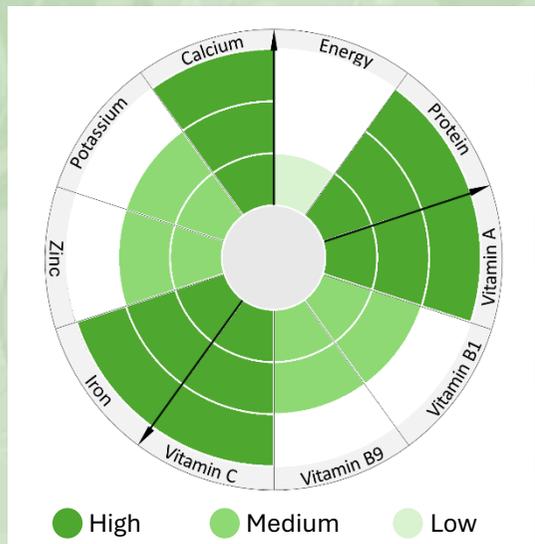


# ຜັກອໍຣູມ

## Drumstick Tree

*Moringa oleifera* Lam.

The **drumstick tree**, known as **moringa**, is a fast-growing plant. Its long, slender pods and green leaves are packed with nutrients, especially iron. Moringa leaves can be cooked in soups, or dried and used as a powder in dishes. The tree is easy to grow in home gardens and is often called a **miracle tree** because of its many health benefits. Eating moringa regularly helps prevent tiredness, supports brain development in children, and keeps the immune system strong. Its mild taste makes it a great addition to many traditional meals.



# ແກງຜັກອໍຣູມໃສ່ປາແຫ້ງ

## Drumstick Tree Soup with Grilled Fish

### Ingredients

- 1 liter of clean water
- **500 g young and tender drumstick tree leaves**
- 2 grilled fish
- 1 teaspoon seasoning powder (MSG)
- 1½ teaspoon fish sauce
- 1 ½ teaspoon salt

### Method

- Add water and seasonings into a pot and bring it to a boil
- Add the grilled fish to the boiling water and cook until fully done
- Add the Drumstick Tree leaves
- Continue boiling for about 5 minutes until leaves are cooked
- Serve hot in a bowl. It is a tasty and nutritious dish



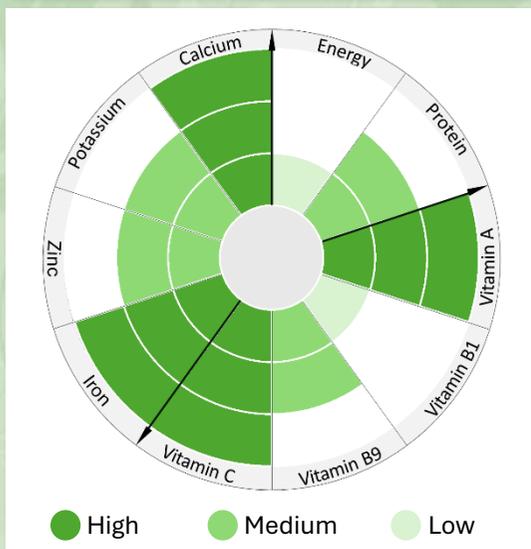


## ຕົ້ນຜັກສັງຽນ

### Wild Spider Flower

Gynandropsis gynandra (L.) Briq.

The **wild spider flower** is a leafy green plant with small, spider-like flowers. Its tender leaves and young shoots are rich in iron, making it a valuable food for preventing tiredness and keeping your blood healthy. Wild spider flower is often stir-fried, boiled, or added to soups, giving dishes a slightly peppery taste. Because it grows easily in gardens and wild areas, it is a popular and nutritious choice for families looking to boost their iron intake naturally. Eating wild spider flower helps support energy levels, especially for children and pregnant women.



## ວິທີເຮັດສົ້ມຜັກສັງຽນ

### Sour Wild Spider Flower

#### Ingredients

- 1–2 kg wild spider flower leaves
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1–2 teaspoons salt
- About 4–5 tablespoons rice water (water from soaked or rinsed rice)



#### Method

- Wash the wild spider flower thoroughly, then leave in the sun until they are slightly dry
- Massage the leaves gently, then rinse them once with clean water
- Sprinkle salt and sugar over the leaves and mix well
- Add the rice water and massage the mixture until well combined
- Place into a jar or container
- Close the lid and leave it to ferment for about 1–2 days (or 3 days if the weather is not sunny) until the vegetables develop a sour taste
- The leaves are ready to eat once they reach the desired sourness





## ຜັກບຶ້ງ

### Water Morning Glory

*Ipomoea aquatica* Forssk.

**Water morning glory** is a fast-growing, semi-aquatic leafy green found near rivers, ponds, and rice fields. Its tender stems and leaves are a popular ingredient in Lao cuisine, often stir-fried with garlic, chili, or fermented fish sauce, or added to soups and salads. It is rich in iron, making it an excellent food for preventing anaemia and boosting energy, especially for women and children. It also provides vitamins A and C, which help your body absorb iron more effectively. Because it grows easily in wet conditions and is widely available, it is an accessible choice for rural families.



## ຂົ້ວຜັກບຶ້ງໄຟແດງ

### Stirfried Morning Glory with Chili

#### Ingredients

- 1 bunch of Water Morning Glory
- 3–5 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2–3 red chilies (cut into pieces)
- 1–2 tablespoons of oil
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce
- 1 teaspoon fish sauce
- 1 teaspoon of seasoning powder (MSG)
- A small pinch of sugar
- A little water



#### Method

- Cut Water Morning Glory into pieces and clean with water twice
- Heat a wok or frying pan and add the vegetable oil
- Add the crushed garlic and red chilies; stir-fry until fragrant
- Add the Water Morning Glory and stir quickly
- Season with oyster sauce, fish sauce, MSG and a little sugar
- Add a small splash of water and continue stir-frying for about 1–2 minutes until the vegetables are cooked
- Serve immediately with steamed rice



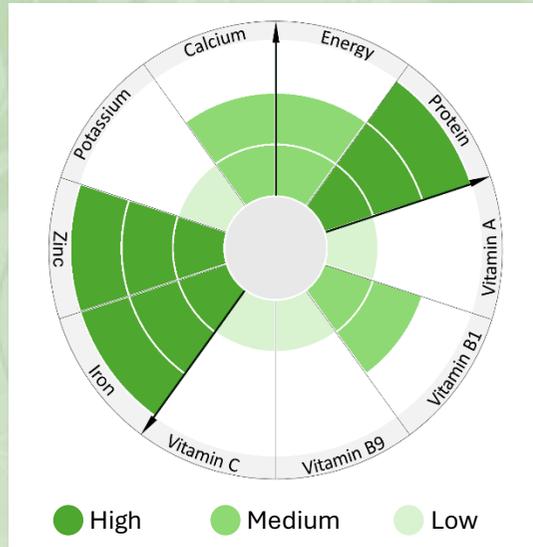


## ແມງຈິງຫຼົດທ້ອງແດງລາຍ

### House crickets

*Acheta domesticus* (Linnaeus, 1758)

The **House Crickets** are commonly found in homes, gardens, and fields. They are a nutritious and sustainable food source, packed with iron and protein, which help prevent anaemia and support energy levels. Often collected during the rainy season, they are typically fried or roasted until crispy and enjoyed as a snack or added to soups and stir-fries. Eating house crickets is a traditional and practical way to boost iron intake, especially for children and women in rural communities. Their crunchy texture and savoury flavours make them a delicious and healthy addition to local meals..



## ທອດແມງຈິງຫຼົດທ້ອງແດງລາຍ

### Crispy Fried House crickets

#### Ingredients

- 200–300 g House Crickets
- 1 bowl frying oil
- 7–10 kaffir lime leaves
- 1 teaspoon Knorr



#### Method

- Wash the crickets and let them drain until dry
- Heat oil in a wok or frying pan over medium-high heat
- Add the crickets and deep-fry them until crispy (3 – 5 minutes)
- Add kaffir lime leaves and fry until fragrant
- Remove from the oil and drain
- Season with Knorr and serve





## ຫອຍປັງ

### Dark Green Apple snail

*Pila virescens* (Deshayes, 1824)

The **dark green apple snail** is a popular freshwater snail found in rice fields, ponds, and slow-moving waters across Laos. Rich in iron and protein, it is a valuable food for preventing anaemia and supporting overall health. This snail is often harvested during the rainy season and prepared in spicy salads, grilled, or added to soups and curries. Eating dark green apple snails is a traditional and nutritious way to boost iron intake, especially for women and children in rural communities. Its mild flavour and tender texture make it a delicious and accessible part of local meals.



## ຕົ້ມຫອຍປັງຈໍ້າແຈ່ວສົ້ມ

### Boiled Dark Green Apple snail with sour sauce

- 2 liters of clean water
- **1 kg of Dark Green Apple Snails**
- 2 sticks of lemon grass (rinse and cut into pieces)
- 5-7 Kaffir lime leaves
- 1 teaspoon of salt

#### Ingredients

#### For sour sauce

- 3 to 5 chilies
- 1 clove garlic (peeled)
- 1 teaspoon of MSG
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon fish sauce
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice



#### Method

- Add water, lemon grass, kaffir leaves, and salt into a pot and boil
- Add the snails and continue boiling 15-20 minutes until cooked

#### Sauce:

- Pound garlic, chilies, seasoning powder, sugar and salt in a mortar
- Add fish sauce and lemon juice
- Stir until combined then pour into a small bowl.

