

COMMON NUTRITIOUS PLANTS FOR HERBIVOROUS REPTILES

from The Reptile Clinician's Handbook

When feeding herbivorous reptiles, such as iguanas, the absolute most important rule is **VARIETY**. Because we don't have tables of nutritional requirements for these species, it is very important to mimic the reptile's natural environment as closely as possible. Here in Indiana, where it can be cost prohibitive to feed fresh vegetables year-round, **Occasional** frozen vegetables may be substituted, but we emphasize occasionally. Nutrients are lost in the freezing process. The following is a list of nutritious plants that can be fed to your lizard. Don't think that any **ONE** ingredient listed here would be a nutritious diet alone, in fact, some of these plants, if fed in excess, can be detrimental to your pet. Also remember that anything you buy, grow, or collect (such as grass clippings) needs to be pesticide/herbicide free, or human grade. A good rule of thumb is that if you wouldn't eat it, don't feed it to your pet.

Alfalfa: fresh, sun-cured hay, dried leaves, pellets, meal

Apple: fresh, with peel, sliced or grated (discard core and seeds)

Barley: freshly sprouted seeds, freshly grown leaves, sun-cured hay

Beans (several edible varieties): fresh leaves and stems, fruit: fresh whole, or mashed after soaking in water overnight

Bean sprouts: (azuki, black-eyed, garbanzo, lentil, mung, pea, etc.): fresh leaves, stems, blossoms, fruit
Recently there have been reports of salmonella/e. coli infected sprouts, therefore consider your source

Beet: tops, stems, flowers, grated root

Berseem (Egyptian clover): leaves, sun-cured hay

Brassica species (bok choy, Brussels sprouts, head and Napa cabbage, collards, kale, mustard greens, rape [canola], rutabaga, turnip): fresh green leaves, flowers

Buffalo grass (*Bulbilis dactyloides*): hay

Cactus: flowers, prickly pears, tender young cactus pads

Carrots: leaves, grated root

Clover (Ladino, Alsike, etc.): fresh, sun-cured hay

Corn (maize): kernels

Cotton: leaves, dried or fresh

Cowpea: sun-cured hay, leaves

Cruciferous vegetables: =syn. With *Brassica* sp.: see above

Dandelion: leaves and stems, flowers, fresh or dried

Dicandra: fresh or sun-cured hay

Escarole: fresh leaves

Page 2

Eugenia: fresh leaves, fruits

Figs: fresh

Grass clippings: freshly mowed or sun-cured

Hibiscus: leaves, flowers, fresh pods

Kudzu: sun-cured hay

Lespedeza: sun-cured hay, leaves

Millet: leaves, sun-cured hay

Mint: sun-cured hay

Mixed vegetables: frozen, thawed

Mulberry: freshly picked tender leaves, fruit

Nasturtium: leaves, stems, flowers

Okra: fresh, chopped, tender leaves and blossoms

Pea: fresh pods, sun-cured hay

Peanut: sun-cured hay with or without nuts

Pear: fresh, cut or grated (discard core and seeds)

Peavine: sun-cured hay

Pelleted commercial chows (Purina, Wayne, etc.) for guinea pigs and rabbits can be fed ad lib; those formulated for horses, goats, dogs, cats, or monkeys, etc. SHOULD NOT BE FED IN EXCESS (<5% of total diet)

Potentilla ground cover: leaves and blossoms; used as a browse

Saltbush (winter range): sun-cured hay

Soybean: fresh leaves or sun-cured hay

Squash: freshly grated flesh, blossoms, tender leaves

Sunflower: seeds (unsalted)

Timothy: sun-cured hay

Tofu soybean cake

Triticale: freshly sprouted seeds, sun-cured hay

Page 3

Vetch: sun-cured hay

We can't reiterate enough that the most important idea is variety. If your reptile is addicted to one particular fruit or vegetable, then blend it in your food processor, at a 50% favorite, 50% variety mixture until the lizard is eating. After you have fed the reptile this mixture for a while and it is eating it reliably, try putting less and less of the favorite in the mixture.

When feeding young herbivorous reptiles, it is important to tear the vegetables into small pieces that the lizard can consume. Once again, blenderizing the dinner will assure that it is uniform throughout and that the young lizard is eating some of everything.

We do not recommend that you take your lizard outside to "graze in the backyard" unless you are closely monitoring what it is eating. Most animals do not instinctively recognize and avoid poisonous plants, or plants treated with pesticides/herbicides, and they can easily poison themselves.

Because we do not have tables of nutrition requirements for herbivorous reptiles, we do not recommend that you feed any diet made specifically for herbivorous reptiles exclusively. These diets may be a good supplement, but don't think that they take the place of fresh vegetables. When using ready-made diets, look for diets that have been used in feeding trials with your particular species, and have guaranteed analysis on the package.