

REPTILES PLUS

CARESHEETS



Reptile Fruit and Vegetables

With so many fruits and vegetables to choose from nowadays, it can be challenging to know which foods are most nutritional for your reptiles. We provide a small list of good and bad foods on our relevant care sheets, but this is far from extensive, so we thought that it would be a good idea to cover a wider range of fruits and vegetables, how beneficial they are and list some dangerous foods to avoid.

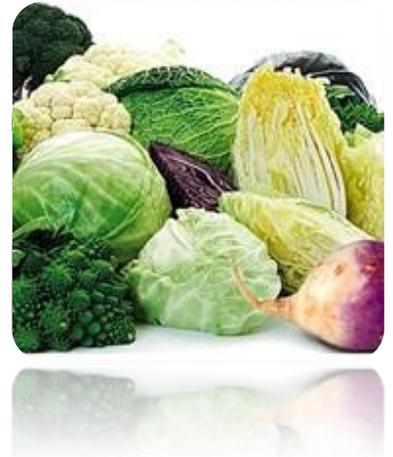
Key components that make a fruit or vegetable good or bad include the Calcium: Phosphorus ratio (Ca:P) and calcium content, Vitamin A content, and the levels of chemicals known as **oxalates** and **goitrogens**.



A varied diet is key to keeping a reptile healthy, and one of the most commonly encountered illnesses is due to a calcium phosphorous ratio of less than 2:1. Therefore the use of calcium supplements and vegetables high in calcium is important. In addition, some vegetables (spinach and cabbage) contain chemicals called **oxalates**, which bind to dietary calcium and other trace minerals which prevents them being absorbed. Low Ca:P ratios can lead to the all-too-common illness known as Metabolic

Bone Disease (MBD, [read our recent article on MBD here](#)).

Goitrogens are found in cabbages, kale and cruciferous plants. Goitrogens inhibit the absorption of iodine which over prolonged periods may lead to a condition known as hypothyroidism. The thyroid gland produces many of the hormones your animal's body needs to function properly and hypothyroidism is a reduced functioning of the thyroid gland. Symptoms of hypothyroidism include lethargy, bloatedness, slow growth, and can eventually prove fatal.



Vitamin A is a key nutrient required in a healthy reptile diet. Vitamin A is important in the functioning of the skin, mucous membranes, retina (part of the eye), muscles, immune system, reproductive system and other systems of the body. Hypovitaminosis A (lack of vitamin A) is most commonly seen in chelonians, such as tortoises. The typical symptoms of vitamin A deficiency are swollen eyelids, swelling around the mouth, nasal discharge, loss of appetite, slowed growth rate and death in severe cases.

Food for Daily Use

The foods below are all suitable to feed on a regular basis. Even the most nutritionally beneficial vegetables shouldn't be solely used, as they will not contain every vitamin and mineral needed by your animal.



Rocket: Found in many mixed bags of salad and is a good source of vitamin A and calcium.

Mustard Greens: Very high vitamin A, good vitamin C, high calcium and potassium.

Friséé lettuce/Endive: Endive is a great all-rounder and is the vegetable most used by ourselves in the shop. Endive is high in calcium, and high in vitamin A.

Cos lettuce: Cos lettuce is one of the better lettuces as it has a lower water content. It is a good source of vitamin A, and good amount of fibre.



Chard: Chard has been bred to be highly nutritional. It is a very good source of fibre, vitamin A, C, E, K, calcium and iron.

Watercress: Watercress contains significant amounts of iron, calcium, iodine, and folic acid, in addition to vitamins A and C.

Squash: Butternut squash is best peeled and grated. It is very high in vitamin A, and a good source of calcium. It can be fed cooked so long as it is cool, though nutritionally it will not be as good as raw butternut squash.

Spring and Collared Greens: These both have very high calcium levels with a Ca:P ratio of 14.5:1. These contain relatively high levels of oxalates and goitrogens so shouldn't be used regularly long term.

Food for Occasional Use

These foods are safe for occasional use and are worth using up if you have them going spare to add variety to your animals diet.



Spinach: Spinach has good levels of iron and calcium as well as A,C,E but high in oxalates and goitrogens so should be used occasionally.

Cabbages: In general, cabbages have a good source of fibre and vitamin C, but are high in goitrogens and oxalates which will counteract these benefits if used regularly. Some cabbages are better than others – spring greens have one of the highest Ca:P ratio of any cabbage and therefore are probably the best choice.



Carrot: Carrots have little calcium but have high levels of carotenes, which are precursors to vitamin A. Carotenes are often used to produce colouration, such as in firebellied toads and therefore can help enhance colouration in some animals.

Broccoli: Broccoli is best avoided as it is high in oxalates and goitrogens. It does however contain fairly good levels of vitamin C.

Other Vegetables

These foods can be used occasionally to add flavour and variety to your animals food.



Basil: Basil provides a good source of vitamin K, which is important in the blood-clotting process.

Chives: Chives are a good source of vitamin A, and K and can add flavour as well as variety.

Dandelion: Dandelion leaves provide a fairly good source of calcium, and good source of vitamin A and K. If taken from the garden, be careful to avoid picking any that may have come into contact with pesticides or other chemicals. Do not use dandelion leaves that are situated near the roadside as these will be contaminated with car exhaust fumes.

Fennel: Fennel adds little nutritional value, but if you have it going spare it is safe to feed and will add flavour and variety to your animals diet.

Mint: Mint offers a unique flavour which iguanas seem to particularly enjoy. They also provide a fairly good source of calcium. Mint is a slight diuretic and may have a negative effect on the kidneys if used very frequently.

Other safe herbs for occasional use include: **Oregano, Rose Petals, Rosemary, Sage and Thyme**

Vegetables High in Calcium

These foods contain high levels of calcium or have a high Ca:P ratio, making them useful foods to regularly add to your animals diet.



Mustard Greens

Ca:P - (2.4 : 1)
Calcium/100g - (103mg/100g)

Spring/Collared Greens

Ca:P - (14.5 : 1)
Calcium/100g - (232mg/100g)

Endive

Ca:P - (1.9 : 1)
Calcium/100g - (52mg/100g)

Rocket

Ca:P - (3.1 : 1)
Calcium/100g - (160mg/100g)

Dandelion Leaves

Ca:P - (2.8 : 1)
Calcium/100g - (187mg/100g)

Chicory Greens

Ca:P - (2.1 : 1)
Calcium/100g - (100mg/100g)

Safe Fruit

In general, most reptile diets should consist of no more than 10% fruit, due to its high sugar content. Many fruits are safe for reptiles but citrus fruits should not be used as these will cause stomach upsets and diarrhoea.



Apple
Apricot
Peaches
Pears

Kiwi
Melon
Mango

Figs: Have a high Ca:P ratio but have a mild laxative effect so shouldn't be used frequently

Plum

Banana: Banana is safe in moderation but it contains high levels of phosphorus which can inhibit the absorption of calcium if used too frequently.

Grapes

Papaya: A high Ca:P ratio of 4.5:1 so a good food for regular use in the 10% fruit portion of your animal's diet.

Blackberries
Blueberries
Strawberries

Watermelon
Raspberries
Rose Petals

Vegetables/Fruit to Avoid

These fruits and vegetables should be avoided as they are not beneficial for your animal and may in some cases be mildly harmful



Citrus Fruits: Lemons, oranges, limes contain citric acids which can irritate the stomachs of reptiles, resulting in stomach upsets, vomiting and diarrhoea.

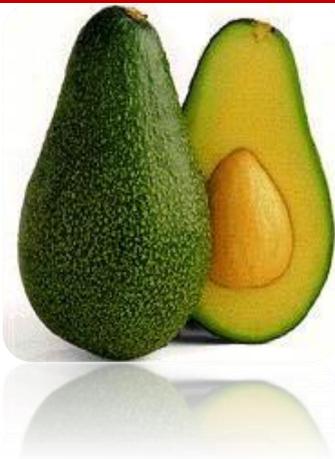
Parsley: Parsley has particularly high oxalate levels and so is best avoided.

Vegetables high in water: **Cucumber, lettuces** – especially iceberg lettuce, and **tomato** all have high levels of water and low nutritional value. Feeding these vegetables isn't beneficial for your animal and can result in diarrhoea.

Brussel Sprouts: Brussel sprouts have high phosphorous levels and contain goitrogens and oxalates

Vegetables that are Toxic

The foods below are all known to be toxic to reptiles and should never be fed to your animals. Some of these may cause stomach upsets, diarrhoea, or even death in serious cases.



Rhubarb

Avocado: contains persin, a chemical toxic to birds and likely reptiles too.

Buttercup

Daffodil

Elderberry

Henbane

Holly

Horse Chestnut

Privet

Snowdrop

Tulip

Any plant whose name begins with "poison" ...

Hyacinth

Hydrangea

Ivy

Jerusalem Cherry

Lily of the valley

Mistletoe

Oak

Poppy

Rhododendron

Sweet Pea

Yew