

Chufa — *Cyperus esculentus* L. var. *sativus* Boeck¹

James M. Stephens²

Chufa has other names such as tiger nut, zulu nut, yellow nutgrass, ground almond, edible rush, and rush nut. It is one of two major species of the nutsedge genus *Cyperus* found throughout Florida on all types of soil from rockland to muck. Its close relative, *C. rotundus*, is purple nutgrass, a severe problem weed. Both are weed pests, but *rotundus* is much more of a problem than the chufa, which has been cultivated as a livestock food. On occasion, it is cultivated for human consumption of the tubers, which are eaten raw or baked.

DESCRIPTION

Chufa is a perennial sedge that produces small tubers ($\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ inch or less in diameter) underground in a chain-like fashion. The top of the plant is grass-like from 6-36 inches tall.

CULTURE

Chufa is planted in late spring to midsummer by dropping the dried tubers 6-12 inches apart in rows spaced 2-3 feet apart. Planting rate is 15-40 pounds per acre. The tuber develops into a plant with several tubers bunched together directly beneath the plant and a few stragglers some distance away. Although bunched together, each nut is attached to a thin underground stem (rhizome) that connects the single tuber to the growing shoot.



Figure 1.

USE

While seldom grown as a food item in home gardens, chufas were grown on about 2,000 farms mostly in Florida in the United States in 1944. In 1941, 7,000 acres were planted for hog pasture in Florida, and over 3,000 bushels were dug from 170 additional acres. The nuts weigh about 44 pounds per bushel. In the 1980s, chufas are still grown for livestock feed on a few farms in the Florida Panhandle.

1. This document is HS583, one of a series of the Horticultural Sciences Department, Florida Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida. Original publication date May 1994. Revised March 2009. Reviewed January 2012. Visit the EDIS website at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu>.

2. James M. Stephens, Professor, Horticultural Sciences Department, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville FL 32611.