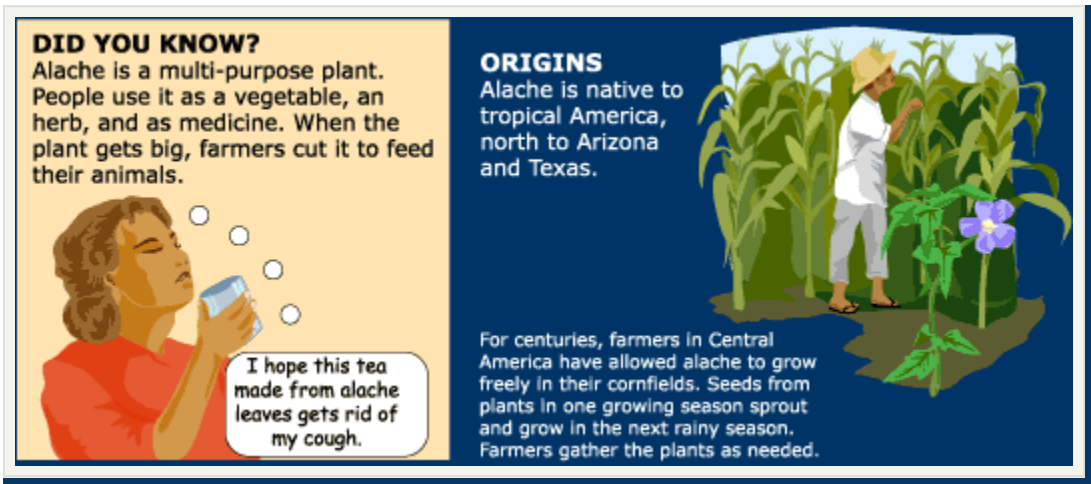
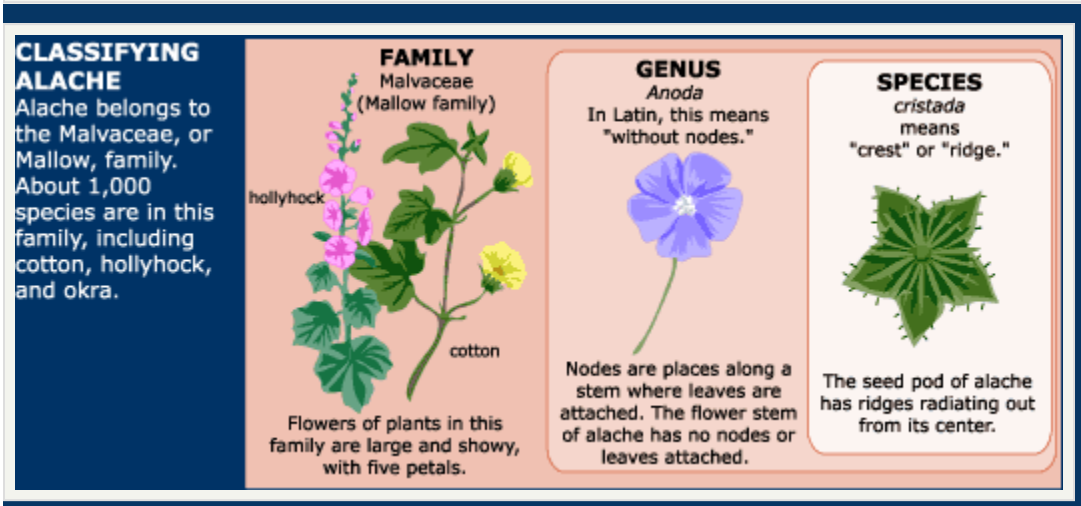
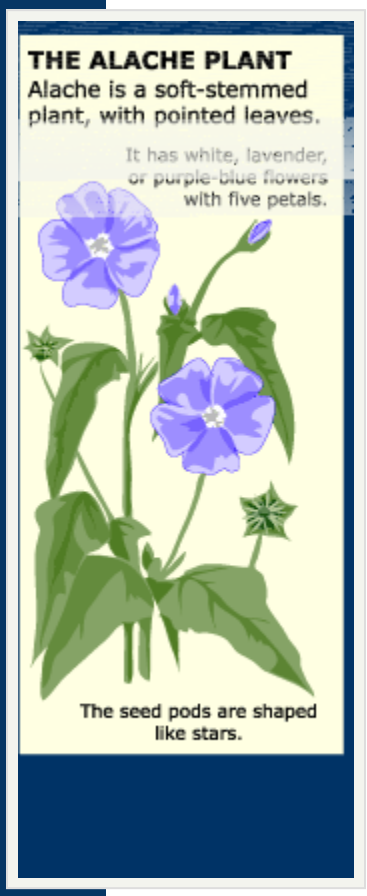
Alache


DID YOU KNOW?
Alache is a multi-purpose plant. People use it as a vegetable, an herb, and as medicine. When the plant gets big, farmers cut it to feed their animals.
I hope this tea made from alache leaves gets rid of my cough.
ORIGINS
Alache is native to tropical America, north to Arizona and Texas.
For centuries, farmers in Central America have allowed alache to grow freely in their cornfields. Seeds from plants in one growing season sprout and grow in the next rainy season. Farmers gather the plants as needed.


CLASSIFYING ALACHE
Alache belongs to the Malvaceae, or Mallow, family. About 1,000 species are in this family, including cotton, hollyhock, and okra.
FAMILY
Malvaceae
(Mallow family)
hollyhock
cotton
Flowers of plants in this family are large and showy, with five petals.
GENUS
Anoda
In Latin, this means "without nodes."
Nodes are places along a stem where leaves are attached. The flower stem of alache has no nodes or leaves attached.
SPECIES
cristada
means
"crest" or "ridge."
The seed pod of alache has ridges radiating out from its center.


THE ALACHE PLANT
Alache is a soft-stemmed plant, with pointed leaves.
It has white, lavender, or purple-blue flowers with five petals.
The seed pods are shaped like stars.

GROWING AND HARVESTING ALACHE

In most parts of the U.S. you can grow alache as an annual. This means it lasts for only one growing season.

Harvest the alache leaves and stems when they are young and tender. Cut the stems near the bottom. The plants resprout easily after cutting. Once alache forms seeds, the leaves become too old and tough to eat.

USES IN COOKING

In Latin America, alache is used as a vegetable and cooking herb.

You can prepare young alache leaves and buds as a vegetable. Boil them and season with salt, red pepper, lemon, and onion. The leaves are also eaten with squash, corn, and beans.

Source URL: https://www.usbg.gov/alache