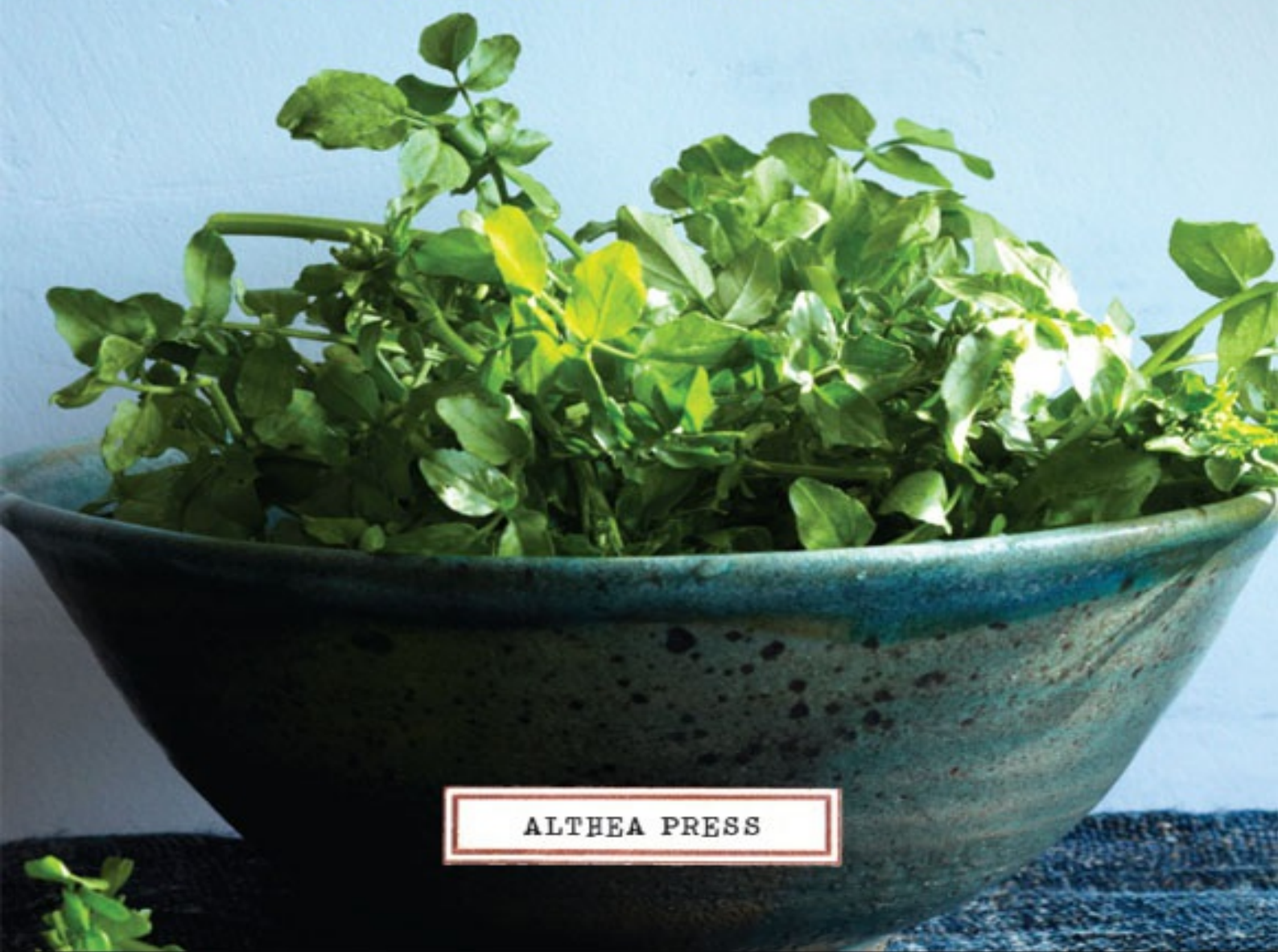


EDIBLE WILD PLANTS

for Beginners

THE ESSENTIAL EDIBLE PLANTS *and* RECIPES TO GET STARTED

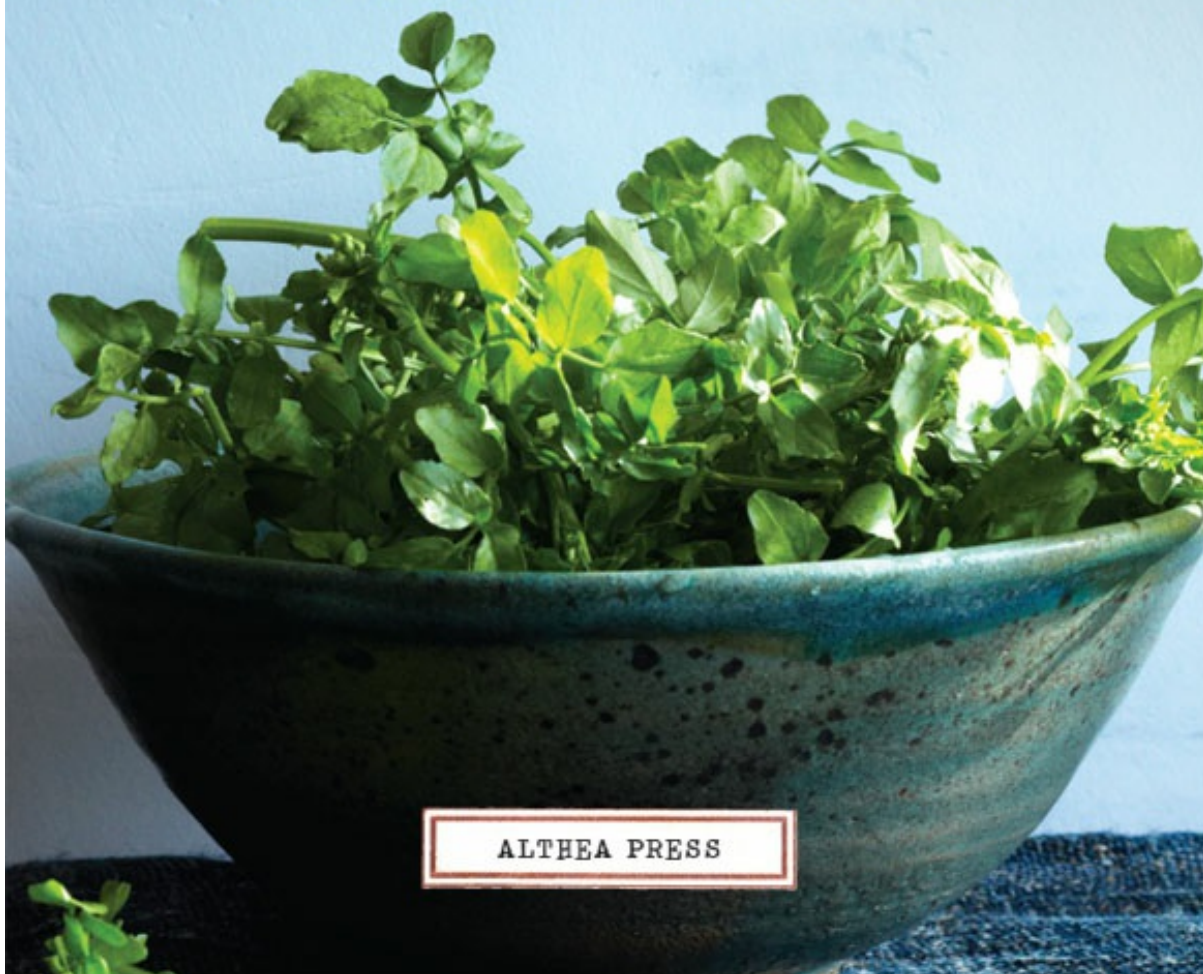


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Introduction

For nearly three million years, our ancestors relied on the riches of the natural world for sustenance, and in some places, people continue to rely on wild plants for at least part of their daily food intake.

Today, though, most of us forage for our food in the well-lit aisles of supermarkets, not realizing that there are wild edible plants free for the taking just outside our doors. Dandelion, chickweed, and lamb's-quarters are just a few of the many plants that can be found growing wild within easy reach.

Whether you live in an urban environment or a rural one, you can make nutritious wild foods part of your diet. They are easy to find, convenient to prepare, and wonderfully flavorful. Over time, you may come to prefer some of these foods over commonly cultivated varieties; their flavors tend to be more interesting and intense.

With the help of this book, you will learn to identify thirty-one of North America's most abundant edible wild plants, and you will learn when and how to harvest them. Many of these plants make excellent substitutes for common vegetables, and all may be used in a variety of recipes.

Before you start foraging, though, please be sure to read this book all the way through. The included principles and cautions are vital not just for your safety but also your ability to enjoy the wild plants you harvest. While it may seem tempting to take shortcuts, doing so is rarely beneficial. Besides, when you take the time to observe plants carefully before harvesting them, you will feel more in tune with the natural world.

PART ONE

Edible Plant Fundamentals

Chapter One The Basics of Edible Plants

Chapter Two Foraging

Chapter Three Wild Food

Chapter Four Foragers Beware

Chapter Five Edible Backyard

The Basics of Edible Plants

A BRIEF HISTORY OF EDIBLE PLANTS

Long before people began to cultivate crops—that is, for nearly all of human history—humanity has survived by hunting and gathering wild foods. Foraging for edible plants was an important part of daily life throughout the spring, summer, and autumn, even after people began to raise crops such as maize, squash, beans, and chili peppers.

Although hunter-gatherer societies are often depicted as eating mostly meat, the opposite is true. Native Americans, for example, primarily consumed a plant-based diet. And like native people everywhere, they had a vast array of wild edible plants available to them. Though we barely notice them today, many of these plants are still abundant.

Women and children bore most of the responsibility for gathering wild nuts, seeds, berries, fruits, roots, and leafy plants. At the beginning of each spring, people were often very hungry, so most of the harvest was eaten immediately. After their winter appetites were satisfied, the foragers continued working hard to gather as much food as possible. Some of it was eaten immediately, and some was dried, cooked, or otherwise preserved before being stored for later use.

In North America, each of the approximately five hundred Native American tribes had their favorite foods, and each had simple, lightweight yet specialized tools for foraging—sharpened sticks, bones, stones, shells, and simple knives for digging roots, and handmade baskets and bags for carrying the harvest.



The staples of Native American food are corn, squash, and beans. Other foods that have been eaten widely include leafy greens, berries, and wild rice.

While the first colonists from Europe brought seeds from their favorite plants when they came to North America, they quickly learned to supplement their diets with plants native to the continent—particularly in springtime, when the weather was too cold for European plants to grow and food supplies were running short. While they cultivated some vegetables we would recognize today in their gardens, these settlers also learned to grow native plants that most people today regard as weeds.

WHAT ARE EDIBLE WILD PLANTS?

Edible wild plants have not been modified by cultivation. They have not been hybridized (crossbred), as many domestic plants have, nor have they been genetically modified.

Some edible wild plants are leafy, green, and lettuce-like, while some look a lot like wildflowers. Certain trees bear edible fruit and nuts, and certain shrubs offer a bounty of sweet, colorful berries. Even certain marsh plants, such as cattails, are edible. Just as farmers grow a wide variety of plants for consumption, so does nature offer an abundance of plants that are either completely edible or have edible parts.



All over the world, people eat specific wild foods, and in many places, it is not uncommon for families to venture out into public spaces and wilderness areas in search of favorites. In the United States, Ohioans forage for pawpaws, Virginians forage for ramps, New Englanders seek out fiddlehead ferns, Montanans pick huckleberries, and Arizonans forage for prickly pear cactus.

Even though we call them “wild edibles,” these plants may be grown in gardens just like domestic plants, and in many places, members of traditional societies prefer to grow them rather than rely on foraging. For example, Amazonian tribes plant fruit trees in their villages that are identical to those found in remote locations. This enables them to grow the plants that are native to the area while enjoying the convenience of close proximity.

Many plants found in the wild are closely related to domestically cultivated plants. The process of domestication began when hunter-gatherers noticed they could place seeds in soil and care for the plants as they grew. As they gained more experience, they learned that they could

optimize plant growth and even influence fertility. Over time, the wild plants that were first cultivated were manipulated, with specialized varieties emerging.

Certain plants that are widely cultivated often return to their native state when propagated by birds and animals who eat the seeds, then shed them elsewhere in their feces, or when seeds are blown away by wind. These plants often look very much like their domestic counterparts, though they are often smaller. The Jerusalem artichoke is one example of a popular domestic plant that is also widely sought after by foragers in its wild form. It is closely related to the common garden sunflower, with a smaller flower crowning its top. Indigenous to the North American East Coast and cultivated by Native Americans, this plant has spread across the entire United States.

WHY EAT WILD PLANTS?

There are many reasons people choose to eat wild plants. You may be considering foraging as a way to save money, or you may simply want to add variety to your diet. You may wish to enjoy a closer connection to nature, or you may be curious about wild foods, particularly as many of these plants are making their way into fine restaurants, where they are used in everything from entrées to cocktails.

Wild plants are not only tasty; they are also extremely nutritious and contain important vitamins and minerals. They can be cooked, juiced, chopped, and added to salads. In many cases, you can add them into dishes you already make.

You might be interested in wild plants as a form of survival food. Many people who have found themselves in survival situations have chosen to consume nothing at all rather than accidentally poison themselves by eating wild plants. In cases like these, even a small amount of knowledge about the plants around them would have been invaluable, as there are edible plants everywhere—in forests, on open prairie land, and even in deserts.

No matter what your reason for wanting to eat wild plants, you will find there are many to choose from. You don't have to be a plant expert to identify them, and you don't have to be familiar with every kind of plant that grows in your area—you need know only what to look for, where to find it, how to gather it, which parts to eat, and how to prepare them. It's also vital that you know when to look for the plants you wish to harvest;

some are unpalatable or even inedible during certain life stages.



Many plants now eaten worldwide are native to the Americas. These include avocados, chiles, chocolate, corn, papaya, peanuts, pineapple, potatoes, tomatoes, and vanilla.

PLANTS, FLOWERS, AND WEEDS

Which plants are vegetables? Which ones are flowers? And which ones are weeds? The answers to these questions vary, depending on who you ask. All the plants we eat today, from lettuce to carrots to tomatoes, were wild plants before humans selectively bred them into the varieties found in supermarkets. All of these edible plants, and others that are commonly grown in gardens, have the capacity to develop flowers. When they are not grown in neat rows, harvested at the appropriate time, or staked upright to prevent creeping, they grow leggy and ramble, and might look like weeds.

So it is with wild plants; all are capable of flowering, and all have been classified as weeds by someone at some point. The dandelion is the perfect example of a plant that is revered by some and reviled by many. This highly nutritious plant has greens that make a tangy addition to salad, and its sunny yellow flowers can add color and fragrance to dandelion wine. Even so, its propensity to pop up in lawns and landscaped spaces makes it a target for herbicide-wielding gardeners and homeowners.

If you have a hard time identifying plants, you are certainly not alone. Consider some common fruits and vegetables available in supermarkets: Potatoes, turnips, and beets are root vegetables that grow partly underground. Botanists and gardeners can readily identify these vegetables in a garden from their leafy tops, but most people would walk right past the green leaves, perhaps thinking the plants were weeds. With just a little knowledge, it is very easy to identify plants like these and determine whether they might be edible.

DISSECTING A PLANT: THE EDIBLE PARTS

All plants have some basic parts in common, and every part has a purpose.

- **Roots** keep the plant anchored in the soil, plus they absorb water and nutrients. In addition, they store extra food for later use.
- **Stems** support the plant and carry nutrition throughout its structure.

- **Leaves** capture sunlight, creating most of a plant's food by the process of photosynthesis.
- **Flowers** are used for reproduction.
- **Fruit** protects a plant's seeds until they are ready to grow into new plants. Some fruits contain just one or two seeds, while others contain many.
- **Seeds** contain the DNA needed to form a new plant.

While some plants are completely edible, only certain parts of others are good or safe to eat. Many plants have developed defensive systems, such as spines or toxins, while others have delicious flavors that encourage animals to eat them and, thus, ensure the seeds are propagated.

Leaves are the most commonly consumed plant part: Curly dock, chickweed, and lamb's-quarters are some favorite wild leafy greens. Others, such as fiddlehead ferns, are harvested mainly for their crisp, delicious stems, and some, such as Jerusalem artichokes, are desirable for their tasty, nutrient-dense roots. A few plants, including dandelion and chicory, have edible leaves, flowers, and roots. Others have parts that are edible only after cooking.



Before eating any plant, make sure you are consuming only the edible parts. Although a plant's leaves may be perfectly safe to eat, its roots may be poisonous. Testing the leaves, stems, roots, berries, and other parts separately (using the Universal Edibility Test in [Chapter Four](#)) is a good way to stay safe.

Foraging

IDENTIFYING EDIBLE PLANTS

There are thousands of edible plants in North America; there are also thousands that are either inedible or unpalatable. Some are so poisonous that ingesting even a little can cause extreme illness. For this reason, it is absolutely vital to clearly identify the plants you plan to forage for.

While it is not impossible to learn to identify wild edible plants by using websites and books and by comparing images, it's vital to take great care when you are identifying plants using these kinds of resources. Carry a good camera with you when looking for forage species, and snap clear, close-up images of the plants you see. If you think you know what kind of plants you've photographed, carefully compare your photos with those found online and in plant identification guides. Be sure to look carefully for images of inedible look-alike plants before deciding to try even a tiny taste of the plant in question.

If you have no idea what kind of plants you've photographed, conduct an Internet search using some of the following descriptive information:

- Flower color
- Number of petals
- Leaf shape and color
- Number of leaves per stem or branch

You can also use the geographic location where you found the plant to narrow down the number of results you receive from your search engine. Once you've done this, start looking at images until you get a match. After you have identified the species, determine whether it is edible—confirm and reconfirm that the plant in question is actually a member of the edible species before trying it. You cannot be too careful with this process!

The best way to positively identify wild edibles is to seek help from an experienced forager who is familiar with the plants in your area. They are nearly always happy to share what they know, and many foragers are passionate about the art of gathering wild plants for culinary use. If you do not know someone who is well versed in native plant life where you live, check to see if there is a Native Plant Society chapter in your area. If so, consider joining. If not, consider taking a plant identification class. Universities, community colleges, arboretums, and other organizations offer a wide variety of plant identification courses. To get as much useful information as you possibly can, choose a course that focuses on native plants.



When foraging, be sure to select plants that have not been exposed to pesticides, fossil fuels (including exhaust fumes from cars), herbicides, and other toxins. While it is important to wash wild edible plants before consuming them, washing won't remove all the harmful substances plants have been exposed to, especially if those toxins have been taken into the internal structures of the plant.

Once you have positively identified a plant beyond doubt, use the Universal Edibility Test found in [Chapter Four](#) to ensure that you will not have an adverse reaction to the plant. If a plant is not harvested at the right time, or if it is receiving polluted water or growing in polluted soil, it may not be healthful for you.

FINDING YOUR FOOD

You don't normally need to go far to forage, particularly if the plant you want is a common one, such as chickweed or dandelion. Wild edible plants can spring up anywhere—in parks, in sunny spots between buildings, along roadsides, and at construction sites. Some of the best patches of edible plants can be found in areas where human activity disturbed the earth at some point.

Wild foods grow in random places, so the likelihood that you'll find all the plants you need in one spot is fairly slim. After a few seasons spent foraging, you will become more attuned to the plants you seek, and you will also become well acquainted with their growth cycles.

Learning as much as you can about your favorite plants' life cycles will

prove to be advantageous. For example, some foraged plants produce about the same amount of food annually, while others produce copious amounts every other year or every three years.

WHEN TO HARVEST

Just as there are different harvest seasons for different domesticated plant species, there are specific times for harvesting wild edible plants. Some plants are best to harvest just after the coldest days of winter pass and the first green shoots emerge from the earth. Others are best when harvested during the summer when their fruit is ripe, and still others must develop over the spring and summer and should be harvested only after at least the first frost.

Some edible plants should be harvested during a specific life stage, either for palatability or to make sure toxins have not had a chance to develop. Before foraging for a specific species, do careful research about that plant.



Familiarizing yourself with the areas you plan to forage is an excellent strategy for optimizing your harvest and making sure what you gather tastes good. Start by noticing which plants live in a certain area. Visit the selected area often and keep a close eye on the plants you plan to use and when they reach certain stages of development. This way, you can gather them at exactly the right time.

The best time to forage depends largely on the type of plants you are hoping to harvest. When looking for greens, it is generally best to gather them while the plants are young and tender, particularly when you're foraging for greens that tend to have a bitter or spicy taste. The older the leaves, the more intense these strong flavors are likely to be. Look for plants that are displaying new growth. This usually happens before flower buds begin to appear or after plants have re-seeded themselves, which typically happens during the autumn months. Try to gather leaves in the midmorning, after the dew has evaporated but before the sun's heat has caused the slight wilting that tends to occur in wild plants during the afternoon hours.

When foraging for edible flowers such as dandelion, chicory, or elder, do your best to pick them just as they are reaching their peak, because this

is when they'll be most fragrant and flavorful. Like leaves, they are best picked during the midmorning hours. Use caution if you encounter wild honeybees while foraging for flowers; some of these bees can be aggressive in defending their territory.

Most of the time, roots, tubers, and bulbs—plants whose edible parts grow underground—are gathered during the autumn and winter months, after the top portions of the plant have died back or gone dormant. Many roots can be gathered through the winter, until new growth begins to emerge in the spring. When new growth appears, roots have a tendency to become woody and tough, and their chemical composition changes, rendering some types inedible. There are a few exceptions, though: Wild leeks (ramps), wild onions, and wild garlic are some of the underground plants that are usually harvested during the springtime months, while the plants are young and tender.



Keep a journal about the plants you are seeing, where you are finding them, and when they are ready. Once you have gained experience with foraging, you'll find this to be extremely helpful for planning harvests year after year, particularly if you tend to visit several areas in search of your favorite wild plants.

Seeds such as amaranth are also gathered in the fall, though some may be ready by late summer. Choose a clear day to forage for seeds and grains, preferably three days or longer after the last rain has fallen. Using a pair of sharp garden shears, simply snip the entire seed head off, turn it upside down, and place it in a brown paper bag. You can put several seed heads into the same bag; just be sure to leave room for air to circulate.

When you finish foraging, shake the seed heads while they are in the bag. If they are fully mature, the seeds will drop into the bottom of the bag. If not, simply leave the seed heads in the bag. Store it in a warm, dry place for two days to allow the seed heads to mature further. Then try shaking the seeds off the plant again. Do not allow seed heads to become damp, or they will mold. If your seed harvest does get damp, spread the seed heads out in the sun to dry.

GATHERING FRUITS AND NUTS

Fruits and nuts are excellent forage foods, and many remain in season for

long periods of time. Keep an eye on berry patches, fruit trees, and nut trees, watching for animal and bird activity as well as for animal and bird droppings. When activity increases and you see droppings, it's time to begin your harvest.

Pick only the ripest fruits and berries, as green ones normally won't ripen after they are picked. You'll know a fruit or nut is ripe if it releases easily into your hand when you tug on it. In some cases, you will find perfectly ripe fruit and nuts lying on the ground, which makes them very easy to collect.

When foraging for fruits and nuts, remember that many animals rely on these wild foods for valuable energy that helps them survive the long, lean winter months. Some of these animals, particularly bears, can be territorial and will attack if startled. Be sure to make your presence known while gathering fruits and nuts—talk loudly to a companion, sing to yourself, or wear a bear bell and be sure to keep it ringing as you work.

Consume or preserve fruits and berries immediately after harvesting. These foods do not have long shelf lives and will often spoil within just two to three days.

ESSENTIAL TOOLS

The tools required for foraging are very simple. You may already have some of them.

Backpack

Choose a comfortable backpack with a compartment for your tools, room for a drink and a snack, and a well-padded main compartment for carrying the edible plants you harvest.

Pocket Knife

Select a sharp, stout pocket knife. It doesn't have to have a lot of tools attached to it—just a sturdy main blade.

Scissors

A sharp pair of scissors is useful for cutting small, delicate plants. The scissors don't need to be large or expensive.

Garden Shears

Select a pair of garden shears you can easily operate with one hand. These pruners are perfect for harvesting grains and cutting through tough, woody stems. Clean and lubricate your shears after each foraging expedition and they'll last many years.

Gloves

Many plants, including some popular forage items, defend themselves with sharp thorns and burrs. Select a stout pair of gloves to protect your hands while working with these plants. The gloves will also prove useful if you need to cut your way through brambles to reach certain forage items.

Small, Sharp Trowel

If you're foraging for roots, bulbs, and tubers, bring a small, sharp trowel with you. Choose one with a slender profile, as this will minimize any disturbance of the surrounding soil. When finished with a foraging session, clean and dry your trowel to extend its life.

Regional Plant Identification Guide

Invest in a good regional plant identification guide and bring it with you when you forage. Not only will a small, portable guide help you positively identify the plants you are harvesting, but it will help you steer clear of harmful plants.

Map or GPS

When venturing off the beaten path in search of edible plants, it's very easy to become focused on the task at hand and lose your way. Carry a detailed map of the area or keep a GPS with you. Carry both items, if you think there's a chance the GPS could lose its signal.



You don't need fancy baskets to hold foraged items. In fact, simple paper bags are excellent for carrying most items. Unlike plastic bags, paper sacks allow foraged items to breathe, preventing condensation that can speed spoilage. When gathering heavier items such as fruits or nuts, choose a container such as a plastic water jug with the neck and part of

the flat side cut off. You'll be able to hold the handle or tie it to your belt. If you plan to gather a large amount of food this way, be sure to bring enough containers to hold your harvest.

TEN TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL FORAGING

Before you head out on your first foraging trip, make sure you are properly prepared. Armed with a few simple tools and these practical tips, you will be much more likely to enjoy a successful harvest.

1. Take Your Time

Take your time when foraging, and be sure to set aside enough time from your day not just to look for edible plants, but to clean, store, and process or prepare them properly when you get home.

2. Dress Appropriately

Wear comfortable shoes and suitable clothing for the weather and the conditions you are likely to encounter. Be sure to wear sunscreen and insect repellent if sun or bugs have the potential to prove challenging, and in climates where weather changes frequently, dress in layers or carry a jacket so you will stay comfortable.

3. Pay Attention to Your Surroundings

Pay close attention to your surroundings while foraging. The more closely you observe the areas where plants are growing, the more likely you will be to find the edibles you are looking for. It is very easy to start daydreaming and walk right past the very items you are looking for, particularly when you are first learning how to hunt for edible plants.

4. Be Creative with Your Finds

After making an effort to find, identify, and harvest edible plants, it pays to be creative when preparing them. Be sure to try the recipes in this book, and try dishes you might not typically prepare. Foraging can be an adventure, and the foods you find are more enjoyable when they are prepared with care and creativity.

5. Watch Out for Predators

Know which predators are common in the areas you plan to frequent. Of

all the predators in North America, mountain lions and other big cats are the most dangerous. They are more likely to attack people who are walking alone through wild spaces, and as they view humans as prey, they will attack even if unprovoked. Knowing which predators inhabit the areas you travel through and knowing how to deal with an encounter will give you confidence and help you to enjoy your foraging sessions without fear.

6. Forage Regularly

The most successful foragers spend plenty of time looking for edible plants. By foraging regularly, you will become better acquainted with the areas you enjoy visiting, and you will notice many more plants than you would otherwise.

7. Gradually Expand Your Horizons

When you first begin foraging, try sticking to one or two plants that are common in your area. Once you are comfortable with those plants, add one or two more to your repertoire. By gradually expanding your horizons, you will become a confident, successful forager.

8. Watch for Domestic Plants in Wild Places

People often toss apple and pear cores, cherry pits, and other seeds from domestic plants out onto roadsides and trail sides. Sometimes, conditions are just right for growth, and these domestic plants flourish in unexpected places. Even though they are not truly “wild” foods, these treats can be found in many places.

9. Don't Overlook Parks and Public Spaces

Parks and other public spaces can be excellent places to forage, as long as they are in a relatively natural state. Straying from pathways and trails can lead you to areas groundskeepers leave wild, meaning the plants are far less likely to have been exposed to chemicals. But be aware of your surroundings, and don't disregard cautionary and regulatory signs, particularly if they warn against disturbing vegetation.

10. Do Not Trespass

Do not forage on private property, unless the property owner has given you permission. It can be dangerous to have a run-in with an angry

property owner, and trespassing is a crime that can lead to jail time. If you would like to forage on private land, politely ask the landowner for permission.



Foraging laws vary from one place to the next. Knowing the law in areas where you plan to forage can keep you from being fined or jailed. Some public parks have signs posted prohibiting foraging, while others are patrolled by rangers who may ask you about your activities. Don't flout the law, and when you encounter officials, be open and friendly. In many places, they can be quite accommodating.

BE A GOOD STEWARD

Since foraging involves human activity in wild ecosystems, it's important to use good judgment and make ethical decisions about what to harvest. Begin by knowing which plants are rare or endangered, and refrain from taking these. In addition, never take whole plants unless they are common and abundant.

If you stumble upon a large patch of forage plants, don't give in to the temptation to harvest all of them, even if they are common. Experienced, ethical foragers follow the two-thirds rule, taking a maximum of only one-third of a species from a particular spot and leaving two-thirds of the food behind. The same rule goes for each plant: Harvest only one-third of each plant's resources. There are, of course, some exceptions to this rule—for example, it's not harmful to harvest all the dandelions, garlic mustard, or chickweed from a certain area, as these plants tend to be quite abundant.

Be careful not to cause damage to nearby plants or the ecosystem when foraging. Use care as you walk, and don't leave any litter behind. Finally, consider scattering ripe seeds from plants you find. This will increase your harvest in years to come, and it will have a positive impact on the environment.

CHAPTER THREE

Wild Food

WHAT IS EDIBLE?

At its most basic, an edible wild plant is one that is suitable for consumption by human beings. There are thousands of plants that are not poisonous or toxic, but that doesn't necessarily make them (or all their parts) edible in their natural state. Cattail leaves, for example, won't harm you, but they're extremely difficult to chew.

Some edible wild plants don't appear to be edible, even though parts of them are. Prickly pear cactus, for example, is covered with sharp spines that protect the plant from hungry animals. But when you cut away those spines, the pads and fruit (and the flowers, too!) are tender and delicious.

Finally, some plants or plant parts that are edible are unpleasant to consume without some type of processing, such as peeling or pounding or cooking. Mature dandelion leaves won't hurt or kill you, but they are terribly bitter. Boiling them for a long period of time, then using them in a recipe that contains other ingredients, renders them edible.

WILD NUTRIENTS

Wild plants are often nutritionally superior to domesticated ones, especially agricultural varieties grown in depleted soil. For example, dandelion contains high levels of vitamins A and C, along with potassium, calcium, manganese, and iron. Purslane has among the highest levels of omega-3 fatty acids among all plants, and one cup of chickweed contains about 1,200 mg of calcium, which is 150 percent of the USDA's recommended daily allowance for an adult.

Spinach is widely regarded as an excellent source of iron, as it contains 2.96 mg per cup, which is almost one-sixth of the USDA's recommended daily allowance of 18 mg. Yet humble wild plants often contain much more: One cup of chickweed has 253 mg of iron and a cup of dandelion

root has 96 mg.

To ensure you get the best nutrition possible, forage for a wide variety of wild plants and keep eating plenty of domesticated ones, too. Try to eat a colorful, mostly plant-based diet if at all possible, aiming to consume mainly green plants along with at least one serving of a plant from each of the red, yellow-orange, and blue-purple color families daily.

TRANSPORTING AND STORING FORAGED FOODS

Take great care with transporting the foods you find. Keep them out of sunlight and prevent them from being crushed. It's a good idea to keep a cooler in your vehicle for stowing items you've foraged. There's no need to add ice unless the cooler is exposed to direct sunlight. If you do need to add ice, put a towel on top of the ice and lay your finds on top of the towel. Exposure to very cold temperatures will damage your plants.

When you get home, brush all visible dirt from the plants you have harvested, if you haven't done so already. Do not wash them unless you plan to use them right away. Package them in plastic produce bags with a folded paper towel inside to catch condensation, and place them in the crisper section of the refrigerator. You will need to use them within a day or two, but this will help them stay as fresh as possible in the meantime. Wash the plants just before preparing them.



Use this homemade fruit and vegetable wash to ensure your harvest is perfectly clean: In an empty spray bottle, combine two cups of water, one-quarter cup of baking soda, and three tablespoons of white vinegar. Shake it well before spraying on the food, and allow it to sit for five minutes before rinsing.

SERVING EDIBLE WILD PLANTS

Just as there are hundreds of ways to use, prepare, and serve domestic plants, there are many wonderful ways to enjoy the wild edible plants you harvest. Try your finds raw, if appropriate. Wild greens make wonderfully tasty additions to salads, and some wild foods, such as fruits and berries, are perfect uncooked. Many foragers enjoy nibbling as they hunt for wild foods, particularly in uninhabited places where there is no chance the food has come into contact with contaminants of any kind.

Even spicy or bitter leaves can taste nice when eaten raw, particularly when added to salads made with domestic greens such as baby spinach and a variety of lettuces. Add some dried fruits and a few nuts and toss with a vinaigrette for a simple, nutritious salad.

Whether you eat your finds raw or cook them, take some care with presentation, using your favorite dishes and really showcasing the food you foraged. This is particularly important when serving wild foods to others who might not share your view of foraged plants. Making sure these foods look attractive is one of the best ways to get reluctant friends and family members to try them.

PRESERVING EDIBLE WILD PLANTS

When you harvest more wild food than you can easily eat fresh, use one of these simple methods of preserving them for later enjoyment.

- **Canning:** Canning is a very good way to preserve the foods you harvest in the wild. Be sure to get a good book on the subject and follow all instructions to the letter.
- **Drying:** Leaves, roots, and fruits are all suitable for drying. Use a food dehydrator for best results, or dry your harvest in hot sunlight or in a slow oven. Be sure to slice large foods, such as fruits and roots, into thin slivers before drying to ensure no moisture remains. After food has been dried, store it in tightly sealed jars or bags. For the best taste possible, use it as soon as you can.
- **Freezing:** Freezing the wild foods you find is an excellent method of preservation. There are many books and online guides available with detailed instructions for preserving food by freezing it.

COOKING YOUR WILD FOODS

Many of the wild plants you harvest must be cooked. Begin by trying some of these methods.

- **Baking or roasting:** Edible roots such as arrowroot and cattail rhizomes are ideal for baking and roasting, just as potatoes, parsnips, carrots, and other domestic root crops are. You can use a bit of olive oil and some simple seasonings, such as salt and pepper, to enhance flavor, or you can create casseroles, gratins, and other delectable baked dishes with the roots and other wild plants you find.

- **Boiling:** This method works well for bitter roots and greens. It removes much of the bitterness. Use the water you boiled the plants in as a base for vegetable broth, or simply cool it off and water your houseplants with it.
- **Sautéing:** Sautéing plants, particularly greens, softens them while preventing nutrient loss. Vitamins A, D, E, and K, which are prevalent in wild greens, are fat soluble, so sautéing in a little oil is an excellent way to ensure your body is getting as much nutrition as possible from these plants.
- **Steaming:** Steaming softens roots and leaves without leaching nutrients from them. This is an excellent way to prepare young shoots.



Food tastes best when properly seasoned. Fresh herbs such as basil, cilantro, rosemary, and thyme greatly enhance the natural flavors of wild edible plants. Consider growing your own herbs in your garden or in pots on a windowsill or countertop. This is an easy and inexpensive way to ensure you're always able to add a special gourmet touch to even the simplest recipes.

Foragers Beware

UNIVERSAL EDIBILITY TEST

Use the Universal Edibility Test to determine whether a plant is edible, and whether known edible plants will adversely affect you, particularly if you are sensitive to certain foods. While this test is time consuming, it works. Even if you have adverse reactions to some of the plants you try, you are not likely to become terribly ill.

Begin by separating the plant in question into its basic parts, including roots, leaves, buds, flowers, and stems. You do this because some parts of a plant may be edible, while other portions of the same plant may not be.



Before performing the Universal Edibility Test, make sure you have access to several plants of the same species. That way, if the plant in question passes the test, you will have ready access to safe, natural food. If the plant causes an adverse reaction and you require emergency care, you will be able to bring a sample to the emergency room with you.

Start with Contact

Crush a little bit of each part of the plant, and rub the juice from each part of the plant onto separate parts of your skin. The skin located on the inside of your wrists is very delicate, as is the skin on the inner fold of your elbows; these areas are best for conducting the contact portion of this test. Leave the juice from the plant on your skin for at least fifteen minutes, unless you have an adverse reaction such as itching, burning, or hives. If this happens, cleanse the area thoroughly with soap and water and discontinue the test.



Rather than rely on your memory, make a note of where on your body you applied the juice from each part of the plant. If you have a reaction hours later, you'll know exactly which part of the plant caused it.

If you have no immediate reaction during the contact test, wait eight hours, then check to see whether you had a reaction. If you experience redness, itching, or hives, cleanse the area with soap and water and discontinue the test. If there is no reaction, you are ready for the next part of the test. If you were sensitive only to certain parts of the plant, discontinue testing those parts and proceed with testing the parts that did not cause an adverse reaction.

Use the lip test to further determine whether you might be sensitive to the plant in question. Hold one part of the plant at a time up to your lips, and keep it there for three minutes. If you feel burning or tingling, remove that plant part from your lips and wash them with soap and water. Move to the next plant part and test it only after your lips have returned to normal.

Tasting and Chewing

If the lip test is successful, you are ready for the taste test. This does not involve chewing; simply place the plant part on your tongue and keep it there for fifteen minutes. If you feel burning or tingling, spit the item out and rinse your mouth with water. Proceed with the next plant part only after your mouth looks and feels normal.

The next test is the chew test. If the plant you are trying does not cause a reaction after being held on the tongue for fifteen minutes, chew it up but do not swallow. Hold the chewed-up plant part in your mouth for another fifteen minutes, discarding it and rinsing your mouth well if you feel any burning or tingling sensation.

The Swallow Test

If the chew test is successful, you are ready to swallow the plant. You will need to go a total of sixteen hours without food or beverages, other than water, for this part. Swallow only if there is no trace of burning, tingling, or numbness after the chew test. Make sure you have not eaten recently before beginning this part of the test, as you do not want the results to be confused by anything else you have eaten.

After swallowing, wait eight hours. Drink plenty of water, but do not eat anything else. If you feel nauseous, induce vomiting and seek medical attention immediately. If you feel fine after eight hours, it is time to eat a small amount of the plant part you are testing.

For this portion of the test, you will be eating only the plant part in question. Do not add anything to it, and eat only a small amount—about a quarter cup at most. Wait another eight hours, eating nothing else and drinking only water. If you feel nauseous, induce vomiting and seek medical attention.

If you cannot wait twenty-four hours between real meals, you can conduct the lip, swallow, and eat portions of the test on separate days. But make sure you have not eaten anything or consumed any liquids other than water in the eight hours preceding the tests. If you are testing a plant that requires cooking to remove toxicity or reduce bitterness, prepare the plant by boiling or baking it, but follow the Universal Edibility Test before eating it.

This procedure is lengthy, but it will keep you safe.



Treat all unknown plants with respect, and be sure to teach others, particularly children, to do the same. It is very easy to be deceived by plants, particularly those with shiny, brightly colored berries or beautiful flowers. Taking an extremely cautious approach may seem like overkill, but it can save you from discomfort or even death.

IDENTIFYING SOME COMMON POISONOUS PLANTS

Just as there are many wild edible plants, there are a number of common poisonous plants. Fortunately, there are plenty of images of poisonous plants available online and in plant identification guides, and many poisonous plants have distinct features that make them very easy to identify.

Many of the most poisonous plants cause adverse skin reactions following contact, and others have beautiful berries or glossy leaves that give them a misleadingly attractive appearance. The poisonous plants listed here are common, but they are not the only ones you are likely to encounter while foraging. (See [Appendix B](#) for a list of the ten most common poisonous plants in North America.)

Mistletoe

This holiday favorite is an evergreen with thick, rubbery, oval green leaves and pretty, white, waxy-looking berries in clusters of two to ten. It is almost always found growing from the branches of another tree or shrub. If consumed, mistletoe causes acute gastrointestinal symptoms, including diarrhea and stomach pain, accompanied by a weak pulse. Mistletoe poisoning can cause death.

Water Hemlock

Also known as cicuta, cowbane, or poison parsnip, water hemlock grows throughout North America, usually in meadow environments, along stream banks, and in marshy and wet areas. This plant can grow to be more than eight feet tall, and has a smooth, hollow branching stem that is sometimes covered in purple stripes or spots. The tuberous root is filled with an oily, yellowish liquid that smells strongly of parsnips and that turns reddish brown when exposed to air. The leaves alternate on the stalk, and have sharply toothed leaflets that form fan shapes. This poisonous plant is crowned with distinctive clusters of tiny white to greenish-yellow flowers. Water hemlock causes seizures if consumed, and it can cause death.

Poison Ivy

As the famous saying goes, “Leaves of three, let it be.” Poison ivy can creep, climb, or assume a bush-like form. At the tip of each of its trailing branches, you’ll see a trio of glossy, attractive leaves that are a shiny, healthy shade of green during the summer months, and that transform themselves into a beautifully vibrant shade of red when the days begin to grow shorter.

Though this plant is very pretty, it is horribly poisonous. Touching the leaves or touching clothing or a pet who has touched the leaves can cause an itchy, painful rash. Pulling the vine out by its roots in an attempt to eradicate it can cause a worse reaction, and if you breathe smoke with burning poison ivy in it or get its sap into a scratch, you will most likely find yourself in the emergency room.

Poison ivy has clusters of berries growing close to its stems; these are green when they first emerge and white when they ripen. While birds eat them with no ill effects, poison ivy berries should not be consumed. Internal discomfort and bleeding can occur when poison ivy is ingested,

and the esophagus, stomach, intestines, and colon can become inflamed and swollen, creating the potential for an obstruction that would require surgical intervention.

Poison ivy grows everywhere in the United States except the far West, high altitude areas, and deserts. While some people seem to be immune to the plant, it is best not to test your luck.

Steer Clear: Warning Features

Besides steering clear of plants with leaves that grow in clusters of three, there are some additional ways you can quickly identify and avoid poisonous plants. While many toxic plants do not have any of these warning features, many do.

- Bristly hairs on leaves are indicative of a plant that is a skin irritant. There are a few plants with this characteristic that are safe, though.
- Plants with bulbs, beans, or seeds inside pods should be avoided, unless they can be identified with certainty.
- If a plant has foliage that looks like dill, parsley, or carrot tops, it is most likely toxic.
- Avoid any plant with an almond-like scent in either its leaves or woody parts. Cyanide is present naturally in many plants, and smells like almonds.
- Bitter or soapy scents or flavors are indicative of toxicity.
- If a plant has milky sap or sap that changes color when snapped open, it may be toxic. Test with extreme caution.
- Avoid plants with grain heads that have black, pink, or purplish spurs on their tips.

RULES FOR AVOIDING POISONOUS PLANTS

Avoiding poisonous plants is fairly simple, as long as you follow these three rules.

1. Know which poisonous plants grow in areas you spend time in. Learn what they look like and determine whether any of them are similar in appearance to common edible plants.
2. Identify all plants before taking the Universal Edibility Test. If you have even the slightest doubt in your mind about a plant's safety, do not try to consume it.

3. Notice which plants are growing near those you are foraging for. If you see poisonous plants near a forage patch, don't bother to harvest the benign plants. Ingesting even small amounts of poison can cause serious harm.

Edible Backyard

CULTIVATING YOUR OWN WILD PLANT GARDEN

If you enjoy eating wild plants, you may wish to save yourself some time by cultivating your own wild plant garden. You do not need a lot of space to do this. In fact, you can grow many wild plants in large pots.

Begin by noticing which plants are common in your area, and notice the type of conditions these plants seem to prefer. If you can duplicate these conditions at home, you are almost certain to enjoy a successful planting and harvesting experience.

PREPARING YOUR GARDEN

After deciding which plants you want to grow, lay out your garden. You may already have a vegetable garden at home. If so, simply set aside a space for the wild plants you wish to grow.

If you have no garden, decide whether you'd like to till a spot for your wild plants, or if you'd like to create a raised-bed garden. The options for creating a garden space are nearly endless; some people enjoy straw bale gardening, which involves no digging and only a little preparation, while others prefer to create formal garden areas complete with stepping stones, water features, and other decorative elements.

Once you know which method you'd like to try, choose the location for your garden. Unless you are planning to grow plants that prefer heavy shade, select a space that faces south and receives about eight hours of sunlight each day during the growing season. Be sure you have ready access to a water supply, so you don't have to carry water a long distance.

Next, determine how large you'd like the garden to be. If you are not an experienced gardener, it's a good idea to start small—you can always add more space later. A four-by-four square space will enable you to grow quite a bit of food, yet it is very easy to maintain.



When planting a larger garden, particularly one that includes domestic species as well as wild plants, it's a good idea to plan the garden on paper before planting. Sketch the space out and decide where you will place each species. Learn which plants enjoy living next to one another, and which don't do so well together. There are many resources available that detail the benefits of co-planting.

After deciding on size, either build or buy raised beds or other containers and put them into place. If you will be digging or tilling a new garden, mark out the space with string or chalk and get to work. You can use hand tools such as spades, pickaxes, and pitchforks if the space is small. If it is large, you may want to rent or borrow a rototiller. Pick large rocks out of the soil as you go, and remove large roots and clumps of plant matter, as well. After digging or tilling, rake the soil thoroughly until it is fairly smooth.

If you are creating raised beds or container gardens, buy organic potting mix to fill them, unless you have ready access to good, clean soil. If you're digging a new garden space, add a three-inch layer of compost to the cleared area, then mix it thoroughly with the soil underneath. Do not add any commercial fertilizer. Wild plants need natural conditions to thrive.

PLANTS AND SEEDS

While some wild plants, such as lamb's-quarters, chicory, and amaranth, may appear on their own if they are abundant in your area, some of your favorite forage species may need to be relocated. To relocate plants, bring plastic bags and a shovel to the area where they grow naturally. Carefully dig the plants out of the ground, taking care not to damage their root structures. Place the root ball, along with some of the native soil, into the plastic bag. Get the plants home as quickly as possible. Don't worry if they appear to be a little wilted; this is normal.

Dig a spot in the garden for each plant, ensuring you leave plenty of space between plants so they can flourish. Add the native soil from each bag to the corresponding hole, then set the plant into place. Carefully bury the roots with soil and tamp it down lightly with your hands. Water your plants thoroughly after putting them in the ground, and be sure they receive as much water as they need during the growing season.

Many wild edible plants produce seeds that are readily identifiable. It is very easy to find and plant these seeds. Begin by determining what mature plants look like, and by determining what their seeds look like. Harvest a few of these seed heads from the wild, covering the seed heads with a paper bag. Allow the seed head to dry inside the bag, and then shake out the seeds. Discard the seed head and label each bag according to its contents.

When you are ready to plant, simply scatter the seeds across a predetermined portion of your garden. If you like the way rows of vegetables look, you can make rows of wild plants rather than growing them in patches. Water the seeds after you plant them, and within a short time, you should begin to see new plants emerging.

TENDING YOUR GARDEN

Very few wild plants require much pruning. In fact, most dislike it and do best when left to grow on their own. As for weeding, you may find noxious species in your garden that you'd like to eliminate, or you might notice more edible plants springing up.

Light weeding maintains tidiness and gives the plants you like best plenty of room to spread out. The best time to weed is in the morning, when soil is damp from dew. Weeds are easiest to pull when they are tiny, so take a few minutes each morning to go on weed patrol, and you'll never end up spending hours yanking tough, woody-stemmed weeds from your garden.



Each of the plants you grow in your wild garden will need to be harvested at a different time, depending on which part of the plant you want to eat. For best results, check on your plants each day to ensure you harvest edible parts at the appropriate time.

PART TWO

Edible Plants, Recipes, and Remedies

Chapter Six Edible Plant Profiles

Chapter Seven Edible Plant Recipes and Remedies

CHAPTER SIX

Edible Plant Profiles

Learning as much as possible about the plants you intend to consume includes gaining knowledge about their unique characteristics. Each of the following profiles contains a description of the plant, along with information about when and where to look for it.

Edible wild plants are widely available and easy to find as long as you know exactly what you are looking for. Although you will find information about any dangerous look-alike plants in this chapter, ensure that you are absolutely certain you have properly identified the plants you plan to consume, as mistakes can be hazardous to your health and sometimes fatal. For example, poisonous hemlock has killed foragers who mistook it for wild parsnip or wild carrot. If you are at all in doubt about a plant's identity, do not eat it.

In addition, ensure you are collecting plants from areas where the risk of contamination from pesticides, herbicides, or exhaust from passing traffic is low. Plants that are commonly found along roadsides, near occupied buildings, in parks, and in recently abandoned vacant lots can be susceptible to these contaminants. While it may be tempting to nibble many of these plants as you collect them, it is best to wash them before consumption to reduce the risk of exposure to potential toxins.

With practice, you will find that safely identifying delicious wild plants becomes faster and easier; you will also learn where to find your favorites in the areas you frequently visit.

Amaranth *Amaranthus* spp.

COMMON NAMES

Amaranth, callaloo, kalaloo, pigweed

DESCRIPTION

Amaranth has erect stems that range from bright green to deep red in color. The lower part is usually thick and smooth with the occasional spine, while the upper portion is usually rough, with sharp defensive hairs. The plant's leaves alternate on its stem and can be anywhere from dull green to a shiny reddish green. They are oval to diamond shaped, typically with broad bases and pointed tips. The flowers are small and green, and they are arranged in thick clusters along the top of the plant, with smaller clusters among the leaf axils. Late in the season, the flowers produce small, nutritious seeds.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

This plant is capable of growing up to six feet tall in abandoned spaces. However, most mature plants are between two and three feet high.

FLAVOR

Amaranth has a mild flavor that is a bit like spinach. The seeds are also mild-tasting.

HABITAT

Amaranth is ubiquitous throughout most of North America. It is abundant in areas where soil has been disturbed: Gardens, pastures, and abandoned fields are good places to find it.



SEASON

The first amaranth plants emerge in spring and flourish even after the last frost. Young, tender plants can be found throughout the season in many areas, as it is self-seeding. Mature plants with full seed heads are normally found from late summer to autumn.

EDIBLE PARTS

Leaves and seeds.

COLLECTION

Snip with garden shears.

PREPARATION

Leaves may be eaten raw in salads or cooked using any method. Seeds may be sprouted and added to salads, eaten raw, or lightly toasted. Grinding amaranth seeds produces a gluten-free flour.

OTHER USES

Amaranth seeds are tiny, but they can be popped just like popcorn. Use a popcorn popper or simply pop the seeds in a hot kettle on the stovetop, shaking them frequently, and taking care not to burn them. Popped amaranth is delicious on its own or when added to granola or trail mix.

CAUTION

Amaranth is easy to cultivate, but it can quickly overrun other plants. Its sharp spines become more like thorns late in the season, so wear gloves when handling whole plants.

Arrowroot *Sagittaria latifolia*

COMMON NAMES

Arrowroot, broadleaf arrowhead, duck potato, Indian potato, tsee goo, wapato

DESCRIPTION

Arrowroot is an abundant aquatic plant with slender leaves shaped like arrowheads and small white flowers arranged on stalks that rise up above the leaves. The edible roots are bulbous and pale. They range in size from about an inch across to approximately the same dimensions as a hen's egg.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Arrowroot leaves have parallel veins and the plant's white flowers have three petals each.

FLAVOR

There's a reason these roots are highly prized; they have a mild, delicious flavor similar to chestnuts or potatoes.

HABITAT

This plant is widespread across North America. Colonies are commonly found along pond and lake margins, as well as along slow-moving riverbanks, particularly in areas where the shoreline forms a curve.

SEASON

Look for arrowroot from late summer to late autumn.

EDIBLE PARTS

The fleshy root corms, which look a bit like small potatoes, are the only edible portion.



COLLECTION

Collecting arrowroot corms can be a messy process, since these tasty tubers grow in mud, usually beneath a shallow layer of water. Gathering them is easiest along pond margins; bring a large bucket with you to contain the roots and make washing easier. A long stick or pitchfork makes detaching the tubers simple. Once freed from the mud, they will float to the surface for easy collection.

PREPARATION

Arrowroot can be eaten raw. It is equally delicious when roasted, fried, or boiled.

OTHER USES

Corms can be cut into thin slices, dried, and ground into a gluten-free flour.

CAUTION

Arrow arum is an inedible plant that looks much like arrowroot. Its leaves have midrib and side veins, and instead of round or oval corms, it has long, slender taproots. Sometimes the two species can be found growing side by side.

Bay Laurel *Laurus nobilis*

COMMON NAMES

Bay laurel, bay tree, laurel, sweet bay

DESCRIPTION

This aromatic evergreen usually grows as a small tree or bushy shrub, though it can grow as high as fifty-nine feet tall. It has long, pointed, glossy dark green leaves and a leathery texture, and bears pale yellow-green flowers beside its leaves. The flowers produce small black drupes (similar to berries) that are approximately one centimeter long.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Bay laurels are often used as ornamental plants. If you forage in parks, your chances of encountering this species are good.

FLAVOR

Savory and slightly sweet.

HABITAT

The bay laurel tree is native to the Mediterranean and cannot withstand cold temperatures for long. They are most common in areas where frosts are few. The tree prefers full sun and moist, well-drained soil, but it can survive in partial shade and poor soil conditions. It does very well when kept in a container and pruned regularly.

SEASON

As bay laurels are evergreens, they can be found year-round. If you'd like to take a stem cutting to grow in your own wild plant garden, do so between late summer and early fall.



EDIBLE PARTS

Leaves.

COLLECTION

Pluck the leaves from the tree.

PREPARATION

Bay laurel is most often used as a spice. Simply put the whole leaves into soups and stews or slip them under poultry skins or into poultry cavities. Dry fresh leaves for later use.

OTHER USES

Bay laurel is used to produce an essential oil that is used to ease altitude sickness and prevent tooth decay.

CAUTION

Though most people are not sensitive to bay laurel, it is a skin irritant to some.

Cat's Ear *Hypochaeris radicata*

COMMON NAMES

Cat's ear, false dandelion, flatweed

DESCRIPTION

Cat's ear has low-lying lobed leaves covered in fine hairs. The leaves grow up to eight inches long; they form a rosette that surrounds the plant's taproot. Tall, forked stems rise up from the center of these leaves, bearing bright yellow flowers that mature to form parachute-like seeds, similar to those dandelions form.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

All portions of this plant exude milky juice when cut.

FLAVOR

This plant's leaves have a mild, bland taste that makes them useful as a salad green. The root is mild flavored, as well.

HABITAT

Cat's ear is common throughout North America. You'll find it growing in sunny areas, particularly in places where the soil has been disturbed. Roadsides, yards, parks, and pastures are good places to look.

SEASON

You'll find cat's ear growing from spring to winter. In hot climates, it often disappears during the summer. In cooler climates where snow is common, it appears in spring and fades after the first few frosts.

EDIBLE PARTS

Buds, flowers, roots, young shoots, and leaves.



COLLECTION

Use scissors or a sharp knife to gather the greens. Use a trowel to dig up taproots.

PREPARATION

Cat's ear can be eaten raw or cooked. Its roots can be roasted to use as a caffeine-free coffee replacement.

OTHER USES

The bright yellow flower produces an abundance of pollen, which makes it an excellent food source for butterflies. Consider planting some around

your wild garden to encourage pollinators to visit.

CAUTION

Cat's ear is considered to be a noxious weed, and it is often sprayed with herbicide when it grows in public spaces and along roadsides. Gather this plant only in areas where herbicides are not used.

Cattail *Typha latifolia*

COMMON NAMES

Bulrush, cat-o'-nine-tail, cattail, corn dog grass, punks

DESCRIPTION

Cattails have a tall, slender profile, with slim leaves surrounding central stalks that support cylindrical brown seed heads. The heads ripen and give off fluff that blows away at the end of each summer. The flowers form again in spring, and for a short time, a cone of powdery yellow pollen is visible at each flower's tip. There are no dangerous look-alike plants.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Cattails can be found in wetlands all over the world, and thanks to their unique shape and their preference for a specific habitat, they are very easy to spot.

FLAVOR

These versatile plants have an interesting, pleasant taste that varies depending on the part of the plant you use. Young shoots are often compared to asparagus, while mature rhizomes are starchy and quite bland.

HABITAT

Cattails are common and are widespread throughout North America's wetlands. These hardy plants are capable of surviving anywhere near a pond or other body of still or slow-moving water with a muddy bottom that can maintain moisture year-round.

SEASON

You can gather cattail rhizomes all year; this makes cattail an excellent survival food. Young shoots are available in early spring, and in late spring, pollen, which can add flavor and interesting color to baked goods, is available.



EDIBLE PARTS

Flowers, pollen, rhizomes, and shoots.

COLLECTION

Use a sharp knife to cut green shoots in the spring and to harvest flowers while they are green. Rhizomes must be dug from the mud, which can be messy. If you'd like to harvest cattail pollen, bring a large zip-top plastic bag with you. Stand near the cattails and bend the stalks into your bag, gently shaking the plants so the pollen falls to the bottom of the bag.

PREPARATION

Shoots may be eaten raw or cooked. Flowers are best when their sheaths are removed. Boil them and eat them like corn on the cob. The rhizomes are best when baked or boiled. However, they may be eaten raw, particularly in survival situations.

OTHER USES

Cattails make an interesting substitute for a flashlight or candle in an emergency. Native Americans used them for a variety of purposes, and during World War II, the U.S. Navy used cattail down to stuff aviation jackets and life vests. Today, these useful plants are making their way into green insulation products, decorative paper, and textiles.

CAUTION

Cattails growing in polluted water can accumulate pesticide residues, lead, and other toxins in their rhizomes. Eat only the cattails you find growing in clean, unpolluted wetlands.

Chamomile *Matricaria chamomille, Chamaemelum nobile*

COMMON NAMES

Camomile, chamomile, pineapple weed

DESCRIPTION

Chamomile has tiny, white daisy-like flowers with bright yellow centers. Its leaves are fern-like and abundant. This plant is capable of reaching a height of about three feet, and normally blooms between May and October, depending on its location.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

This plant typically has several stalks rising up from the root. These spread and branch, giving the chamomile plant quite a large footprint.

FLAVOR

Chamomile has a light, delicious herbal flavor that makes it perfect for consuming raw. The flowers taste a bit like apples and make a lovely addition to summer salads.

HABITAT

Chamomile is common and widespread throughout North America. You'll find this plant in sunny, open locations, usually with little to no shade; meadows pastures, roadsides, and old garden sites are excellent places to forage.

SEASON

Chamomile emerges in spring and fades after the first frost. In warm climates, it can be found year-round.



EDIBLE PARTS

Buds, flowers, and leaves.

COLLECTION

Use a pair of sharp scissors or garden shears to snip the plant's stems.

PREPARATION

Chamomile is best enjoyed raw, but the leaves can be lightly steamed to create a warm, inviting side dish.

OTHER USES

Since chamomile contains compounds that promote physical relaxation, it is a very popular ingredient in bedtime teas. Dry chamomile flowers and store them in an airtight container for cup after cup of comforting tea.

CAUTION

If you suffer from a ragweed allergy, you may also be allergic to chamomile. Also, chamomile contains a compound that can lead to uterine contractions that can cause miscarriage. Pregnant women are advised not to eat chamomile or drink teas containing the plant.

Chickweed *Stellaria media*

COMMON NAMES

Birdseed, chickenwort, chickweed, craches, maruns, satin flower, starweed, starwort, tongue grass, winterweed

DESCRIPTION

A creeping plant that grows between three and eight inches tall at maturity, chickweed forms small, flattened mats that are usually no more than sixteen inches across. The leaves, which are between one-half and one inch long, grow in pairs. They are oval with smooth edges and pointed tips, and the tiny white flowers have five deep-cleft petals, providing the illusion that there are ten. A long green sepal supports each petal.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Chickweed's flowers grow in tightly packed clusters located at the end of each stem.

FLAVOR

Raw chickweed has a light, slightly sweet flavor that is reminiscent of corn. When cooked, it tastes like spinach.

HABITAT

Chickweed can be found in most parts of North America. Watch for it in open areas that get plenty of sun, as well as in areas that are partially shaded. This plant is quite common in lawns and pastures.

SEASON

Chickweed grows all year and does best when no trees or taller plants shade it. While it is easy to find in summer, it tastes best from late fall to early spring. In areas with snowfall, chickweed can be foraged during winter thaws.



EDIBLE PARTS

Buds, flowers, leaves, and stems.

COLLECTION

Gently lift the trailing runners and gather them into a bunch. Use a pair of scissors or garden shears to cut the stems between one and two inches from the ground.

PREPARATION

Wash chickweed before eating it. While leaving the trailing parts intact imparts an interesting look to salads, you may find it more convenient to

chop the plant into smaller sections. All parts can be enjoyed raw or cooked. Cooking causes dramatic shrinkage.

OTHER USES

Chickweed is a common folk remedy for minor cuts, burns, and bruises. A poultice made of whole plant parts is applied to the affected area and left in place for up to three hours.

CAUTION

Toxic spotted spurge has the same trailing habit, and its paired leaves look similar to those of chickweed. Its flowers are a different shape, though, and it has white, milky sap. Inedible oval-leaf knotweed, also known as matted doorweed, also trails the ground; however, its leaves alternate on the stems instead of growing in pairs.

Chicory *Cichorium intybus*

COMMON NAMES

Barbe de capucin, chicory, hendibeh, succory, wild succory

DESCRIPTION

Chicory is a very pretty plant with sky-blue flowers that are about the size of a quarter. It grows to between two and three feet tall, with small leaves along the stalks and clustered dandelion-like leaves at the base.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Chicory leaves are usually quite hairy, and the stem is tough and slightly woody. While almost all the plant's flowers are blue, some can be pale purple, pink, or white. The flowers open each morning and normally close by afternoon.

FLAVOR

When roasted, chicory root has a smooth, pleasant flavor that makes it a good stand-in for coffee. Its green shoots have a mildly bitter taste that adds interest to salads and cooked greens. Chicory root can be eaten boiled when young and tender. It has an interesting flavor that is reminiscent of parsnips.

HABITAT

Chicory can be found in most parts of North America. It is normally found along roadsides, at old barn sites, in pastures, and other areas where the earth has been disturbed.



SEASON

Collect the very young chicory leaves in March and again in November, when new growth emerges; summer heat makes them more bitter. Harvest chicory shoots in spring. If you are growing your own chicory, you can blanch the shoots while they are still in the ground by covering the plants with an overturned flowerpot for a few weeks prior to harvest. This creates a milder taste and a softer texture. Harvest large roots for roasting from late summer to late autumn.

EDIBLE PARTS

Chicory has no inedible parts, but young shoots and the roots are the most

desirable. Buds are sometimes added to salads.

COLLECTION

Dig the roots up with a small, sharp trowel. When harvesting shoots, cut them with a sharp knife.

PREPARATION

Chicory shoots may be eaten raw or cooked. The root should be roasted, boiled, or baked before use to prevent excess gas; in survival situations, the roots, which are high in protein, may be eaten raw.

OTHER USES

Chicory has been shown to reduce parasitic worms in pastured animals, and it is often sown in pastureland to improve the health of the animals kept there.

CAUTION

In many areas, local agencies use weed spray along roadsides. Gather chicory in these areas only if you are absolutely certain spray has not been applied.

Common Mallow *Malva neglecta*

COMMON NAMES

Cheeses, cheeseweed, common mallow, pancake plant

DESCRIPTION

Common mallow is a low-growing plant with toothed, rounded leaves that form a fan shape around the stem. Its flowers are white to pale lavender and they have five petals that surround a small, light-colored center. After the flowers fade, flattened greenish fruits emerge.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

The common mallow's flowers have striped petals and a shape that is slightly reminiscent of the hibiscus.

FLAVOR

This nutritious plant has a mild, appealing taste.

HABITAT

This plant is common throughout North America. Common mallow can grow almost anywhere and is often found along pathways and sidewalks as well as in parks, lawns, and pastures. It loves disturbed soil and likes to grow along fences, barn walls, and curbs.

SEASON

Though you can find common mallow year-round, the best time to forage for it is during spring and fall, when young, tender plants are available.

EDIBLE PARTS

Buds, flowers, fruit, and leaves.



COLLECTION

Pluck the flowers, buds, and fruits from the stems. Harvest the leaves using scissors.

PREPARATION

The fruits and flowers are best enjoyed raw, and they make a lovely addition to salads. Leaves are chewy and should be steamed or sautéed before being eaten. Fruits can be sautéed as well.

OTHER USES

When dried, common mallow makes a very nice tea. Like okra, it's also an

effective thickener for stews and soups.

CAUTION

Native Americans used common mallow as a laxative. Eating too much at once can lead to an urgent need to run to the nearest restroom.

Curly Dock *Rumex crispus*

COMMON NAMES

Coffeeweed, curly dock, narrowdock, sour dock, yellow dock

DESCRIPTION

Curly dock has a stout taproot surrounded by long, narrow leaves with rippled edges. Flower stalks with narrow, alternating leaves rise up from its center in late spring. When mature, the leaves take on a reddish color, and masses of tiny green flowers form at the top of the central stem. These are later replaced by small, brown seeds.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

The flowers and seed are very sticky and burr-like. They will cling to clothing and animal hair, and can be difficult to remove.

FLAVOR

Young curly dock leaves have a sharp, bright taste. As the plant ages, its leaves become bitter, chewy, and unpalatable.

HABITAT

This plant is prevalent throughout North America, and in many places it is considered to be an invasive species. Curly dock is common in open fields, along roadsides, and other areas where soil has been disturbed.

SEASON

Forage for curly dock in early spring, before the central stems emerge.



EDIBLE PARTS

The young leaves of curly dock are edible, as are its stems and seeds. Peel the stems before consuming.

COLLECTION

Use a sharp knife to cut the leaves from the base of the plant.

PREPARATION

Curly dock contains high levels of oxalic acid. While very young leaves can be added to salads and consumed raw in moderation, it's best to boil the greens before eating them. If they taste overly bitter, change the water

a few times during the boiling process.

OTHER USES

The dark brown seeds of curly dock were once roasted and used as a coffee substitute. The seeds can be ground into a flour that has a taste similar to buckwheat flour.

CAUTION

Always wash this plant well before tasting it. Curly dock produces a natural astringent that can numb and irritate the tongue.

Dandelion *Taraxacum*

COMMON NAMES

Blowball, cankerroot, dandelion, downhead, gowan, milk witch, peasant's clock, witches gowan

DESCRIPTION

Dandelions have broad green leaves that form clusters near the ground. A single stem filled with milky sap rises up to support a bright yellow flower with a honey-like fragrance. A downy seed head forms after the flower fades.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Dandelions are resilient plants that will return year after year, even when roots are harvested.

FLAVOR

Dandelion buds and flowers taste lightly sweet and floral. Young dandelion shoots have a slightly bitter taste that mellows with cooking. The flavor is best before the flowers open. The roots have a bitter taste that mellows in autumn.

HABITAT

You can find dandelions all across North America. They are common and widespread. Untreated lawns, pastures, parks, and old home sites are good places to forage.

SEASON

In warm climates, dandelions are abundant throughout the year. In cooler climates, the first green shoots arrive as the earth begins to warm. Small shoots may be gathered all year, if available.



EDIBLE PARTS

The best parts are the young leaves, buds, flowers, and roots. Older leaves are bitter, and the stalks are inedible.

COLLECTION

Simply pick the young leaves, buds, and flowers from the plant. If soil is soft or soggy, the roots can be pulled with ease; in firm or dry soil, use a trowel to dig the roots. Soaking the roots for fifteen minutes makes scrubbing more effective.

PREPARATION

Wash all parts before eating. Greens, buds, and flowers may be eaten raw or added to recipes. Roots should be scrubbed, scraped, and cooked before consumption, and may be roasted for use as a caffeine-free coffee replacement.

OTHER USES

Herbalists recommend dandelion for detoxification, as it aids in the removal of uric acid crystals that accumulate in the liver and kidneys. When used for this purpose, the plant can be eaten raw, juiced, or made into a tea.

CAUTION

As dandelion is considered to be a noxious weed by many, it is heavily targeted by herbicide-toting gardeners and public works departments; even so, it often manages to survive. Gather this plant only in areas where you are absolutely certain no weed killer has been applied.

Elder *Sambucus nigra*

COMMON NAMES

Elder, elderberry

DESCRIPTION

Elder is a small, shrub-like deciduous tree that grows to a maximum height of about thirty feet. It has broad, bright green leaves that grow in opposing pairs. Its tiny white to cream flowers have five petals each, and its berries are a dark, glossy purple.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

The flowers and fruits of the elder tree grow in tight clusters. The tree's bark is light gray when the plant is young, later developing vertical furrows.

FLAVOR

Elderflower heads are sweet, with a honey-like flavor. The berries are sweet when ripe, with an astringent undertone that can be removed by cooking.

HABITAT

Elder can be found all across North America and will grow in a variety of conditions, including damp or dry fertile soil. Elder trees prefer sunny locations.

SEASON

Flowers bloom by the end of spring, and berries ripen by late summer to early autumn.

EDIBLE PARTS

Berries and flowers.



COLLECTION

Use a sharp pair of scissors or garden shears to snip flowers from the tree. Collect berries by picking.

PREPARATION

Both elderflowers and elder berries are suitable for making teas and for brewing into wines and cordials. Elder berries are good for making syrups, jams, and jellies.

OTHER USES

Tea made from elderflowers has traditionally been used to ease

congestion. To make a tea, steep dried flowers in boiling water for a minimum of fifteen minutes.

CAUTION

Unripe elder berries are toxic. Ripe berries may still contain small amounts of toxin, and cooking before consumption is advised.

Fiddlehead Fern *Matteuccia struthiopteris*

COMMON NAMES

Fiddlehead fern, ostrich fern, shuttlecock fern

DESCRIPTION

These ferns have crown-like growths that produce two separate types of structures. Some of the fronds are tall, green, and leafy, while others are shorter, with brown, woody stalks.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Edible fiddlehead ferns are tightly coiled, just like the end of a stringed instrument, such as a violin or cello.

FLAVOR

Fiddlehead ferns taste much like a cross between asparagus and snap peas. They have a crunchy texture.

HABITAT

These ferns grow in cool, temperate locations throughout North America. Fiddlehead ferns are found in woodland habitats.

SEASON

Fiddlehead ferns emerge in early spring and are available for only two to three days after emerging. In most places, they emerge in April or May.

EDIBLE PARTS

Only the young, tender fiddleheads are edible. Older portions of the plant are overly chewy.



COLLECTION

Use a sharp knife to harvest the fiddleheads.

PREPARATION

Steam or sauté fiddlehead ferns to maximize flavor and tenderness.

OTHER USES

These ferns are very popular in shade gardens and will sometimes grow in containers.

CAUTION

There are a number of fern species growing throughout North America, but not all are edible. Be sure you are foraging for only edible species. In addition, foraging for fiddlehead ferns is sometimes prohibited, as these plants are rare in certain areas. Be sure foraging is permitted before harvesting.

Garlic Mustard *Alliaria petiolata*

COMMON NAMES

Garlic mustard, garlic root, hedge garlic, Jack-by-the-hedge, penny hedge, poor man's mustard

DESCRIPTION

Garlic mustard is a biennial that can be eaten in either the first or second year. During the first year of growth, garlic mustard forms clumps of round, wrinkled leaves similar to those produced by violets. The following year, the plants grow taller, producing white clusters of cross-shaped flowers.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

The leaves smell like garlic when crushed.

FLAVOR

Garlic mustard has a fairly sharp, herbaceous, mildly bitter flavor that many people find pleasant.

HABITAT

Garlic mustard is common and widespread throughout North America, particularly in areas where soil has been disturbed, along woodland edges, and in pastures and meadows. It likes rich, moist, shady areas and forests. It spreads rapidly and can often be found in large patches.

SEASON

Forage for garlic mustard between late fall, when the plant's basal leaves first appear, and early spring, before its flower stalk begins to grow.



EDIBLE PARTS

Although all parts of the garlic mustard plant are nontoxic, only the young, tender leaves are good to eat; older leaves are quite bitter and unpleasant tasting.

COLLECTION

Since garlic mustard is an invasive plant that spreads rapidly, feel free to simply pull young plants straight up out of the ground. This will speed up the foraging process quite a bit.

PREPARATION

Cut the leaves away from the roots and wash well. If you like the taste of raw garlic mustard, you can add a bit to a salad. It is usually steamed or boiled before eating.

OTHER USES

Garlic mustard was traditionally used to make a light yellow dye for woolens and other fabrics.

CAUTION

When growing your own wild plant garden, consider leaving out the garlic mustard. This plant is extremely invasive and can completely take over a space. It is much more beneficial to forage for it in the wild.

Jerusalem Artichoke *Helianthus tuberosus*

COMMON NAMES

Jerusalem artichoke, sunchoke, topinambour

DESCRIPTION

Jerusalem artichokes look like miniature yellow sunflowers, with bright yellow petals and brown “eyes” at their centers. The plant’s stems are slender and lightly furred, and the leaves are fairly soft. The tubers are gnarled and uneven, bearing a slight resemblance to ginger root.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

A mature Jerusalem artichoke plant is capable of growing six feet or higher. Each plant has several flowers, which distinguishes it from its sunflower cousins.

FLAVOR

The roots of the Jerusalem artichoke have a mild, pleasant taste that is similar to that of an artichoke, as long as they are harvested after the first frost. If dug too soon, the taste can be unpleasant.

HABITAT

Jerusalem artichokes are common throughout North America. These robust plants are happy in almost any type of soil, as long as sun is plentiful. You’ll find them along roadsides and in vacant lots, as well as at old home sites and in fallow fields.

SEASON

Harvest Jerusalem artichokes any time after the first frost, while there is still foliage.



EDIBLE PARTS

Roots.

COLLECTION

Using a shovel, dig the roots from the ground. Try not to disturb the surrounding plants.

PREPARATION

When served raw, Jerusalem artichokes have a crisp, crunchy texture that makes them a fantastic addition to salads. Rather than boiling, which can lead to a mushy, rather unpalatable mess, simply steam these delicate roots

to keep their flavor and texture intact.

OTHER USES

Roasted tubers have been used as a coffee substitute. The flowers attract pollinators and make an attractive addition to the garden.

CAUTION

Do not give in to the temptation to harvest Jerusalem artichokes too early. During the plant's growth phase, high levels of inulin are present, which can lead to gastric distress, bloating, and extreme flatulence. Once the plant has fully developed, the flavor improves and the side effects dissipate.

Juniper *Juniperus communis*

COMMON NAMES

Common juniper, juniper

DESCRIPTION

Juniper is a small, coniferous evergreen tree that rarely grows to more than thirty feet tall, and may be shrub-like. When ripe, the female berries or seed cones take on a waxy coating and become bluish black. Male cones are small and yellow, and fall to the ground shortly after shedding their pollen.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

The leaves or needles of the juniper tree grow in whorls of three.

FLAVOR

Juniper has a very strong, cool, refreshing evergreen taste.

HABITAT

Juniper is common and widespread. Though this tree's natural habitat is the cool northern regions of North America, it is cultivated as an ornamental tree throughout the continent.

SEASON

This tree ripens on a three-year cycle, forming flowers in the first year, green berries in the second year, and ripe berries in the third year. Most juniper trees have a combination of all three berry stages at any given time. Harvest only ripe berries.

EDIBLE PARTS

Only the ripe purple berries are edible.



COLLECTION

Pluck ripe berries from the tree.

PREPARATION

Juniper berries have a pungent taste, and are typically crushed and used for seasoning other foods, as well as for flavoring alcoholic beverages. For example, gin gets its flavor from juniper berries.

OTHER USES

Some Native Americans used the sap and inner bark of the juniper tree as a sweetener.

CAUTION

There are many species of juniper and not all of them are edible. Be certain you are harvesting and using berries from only *Juniperus communis*.

Lamb's-Quarters *Chenopodium album*

COMMON NAMES

Fat hen, goosefoot, lamb's-quarters, pigweed, wild spinach

DESCRIPTION

Lamb's-quarters have green to reddish-green central stalks that become woody as the plant ages. The arrowhead-shaped leaves are soft, with slightly silvery centers and toothed edges. Plants can grow four to six feet tall.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

These plants often grow in masses and their silvery leaves make them unmistakable.

FLAVOR

This plant has an earthy taste, with a flavor similar to that of chard or mature spinach. Its mineral undertone can be attributed to its high calcium content.

HABITAT

Lamb's-quarters is a hardy species that can be found across North America, along roadsides, in gardens, at construction sites, in pastures, and in areas where the earth has been disturbed.

SEASON

In warm climates, lamb's-quarters can be found all year. In temperate climates, the plant emerges in spring and dies back after the first few frosts.

EDIBLE PARTS

Leaves and stems.



COLLECTION

Pick leaves only from the top of the plant. Use scissors, a knife, or garden shears to cut the stems.

PREPARATION

Though young leaves and small stems taste nice raw, mature leaves can be bitter. Boiling increases their palatability. However, dramatic shrinkage occurs with cooking.

OTHER USES

Tea made from lamb's-quarters may be used to ease diarrhea.

CAUTION

Harvest lamb's-quarters only from areas you are certain have not been treated with weed killer.

Milkweed *Asclepias syriaca*

COMMON NAMES

Milkweed, silkweed

DESCRIPTION

Milkweed has broad, thick leaves with smooth edges, and tightly packed buds that open into clusters of fragrant flowers. The flowers eventually become seed pods. Beginning late in summer, the pods ripen fully, eventually opening completely to release parachute-like seeds. A mature milkweed plant normally is two to four feet tall.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Edible milkweed plants have fine white hairs on their stems.

FLAVOR

Milkweed has an interesting flavor that is somewhat like green beans combined with asparagus. Older plants take on a bitter, unappealing taste.

HABITAT

This plant is common throughout North America. Milkweed plants prefer open, sunny locations and can be readily found in meadows, pastures, and along roadsides.

SEASON

Harvest shoots in the springtime and pods during the summer months.

EDIBLE PARTS

Buds, pods, and shoots.



COLLECTION

Pick or cut shoots in early spring, looking for the youngest, most tender leaves. Pluck buds and pods from plant tops.

PREPARATION

Edible parts may be consumed raw, steamed, boiled, sautéed, or baked.

OTHER USES

When cultivated, milkweed emits a strong, pleasant scent. It is excellent for attracting butterflies and other pollinators to the garden.

CAUTION

Milkweed can cause mild dermatitis in sensitive individuals. It is also a source of natural latex, so individuals with latex allergies should steer clear of this plant. Toxic dogbane is a close relative with a similar appearance, minus the fine white hairs edible milkweed has on its stems; it will blister the skin.

Nettle *Urtica dioica*

COMMON NAMES

Burn hazel, burn nettle, burn weed, common nettle, nettle, stinging nettle

DESCRIPTION

This herbaceous perennial grows to heights between three and seven feet when mature. Its soft green leaves are between one and six inches long, and its tiny flowers can be green, yellow, or brown.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

These plants typically grow in large patches.

FLAVOR

Nettles have a pleasant, earthy flavor. The leaves taste like a cross between spinach and cucumber.

HABITAT

Nettles are common and widespread throughout North America's temperate zones, preferring areas that receive a bit of shade each day. Nettles appear in the same place year after year. They can be found in rich disturbed soil, in moist woodlands, and on partially shaded trails.

SEASON

Young nettles emerge in early spring after snow thaws, and fade away when winter comes. As they are self-seeding, it is possible to find edible nettles from the beginning of spring to late fall. Collect the leaves before the plants bloom, in the early spring or the fall.



EDIBLE PARTS

Young nettle leaves are best, though larger leaves may be consumed.

COLLECTION

Simply pluck leaves from the plants. Avoid plants with flowers, as these tend to have a tougher texture and a bitter flavor.

PREPARATION

Nettles must be cooked before eating. Steam, sauté, or boil them as you would spinach.

OTHER USES

Compresses made with stinging nettles have traditionally been used to relieve arthritis pain and aching muscles.

CAUTION

Nettles have hollow, stinging fibers when mature. These can cause severe itching and rashes. Protect yourself by wearing long pants, a long-sleeve shirt, and gloves when foraging.

Nipplewort *Lapsana communis*

COMMON NAME

Nipplewort

DESCRIPTION

Nipplewort plants have clustered leaves at their base. They grow to be about three feet tall. This species has spindly stems covered in fine hairs, and produces yellow flowers up to an inch across.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Nipplewort buds are elongated with dark green stripes.

FLAVOR

Young nipplewort leaves taste similar to spinach. As the leaves mature, they take on a spicy, radish-like flavor. As plants get older, the leaves become bitter and unappealing.

HABITAT

Nipplewort is common and widespread. You can find it in most locations throughout North America, particularly in areas where the soil has been disturbed.

SEASON

Harvest young nipplewort leaves in spring and early fall.

EDIBLE PARTS

The young, tender leaves are best. Mature leaves may be eaten but must be boiled to remove the bitterness.



COLLECTION

Pluck young leaves from the base of the nipplewort plant.

PREPARATION

The youngest, most tender leaves are good in salads—not surprising, since nipplewort is closely related to lettuce. You may also sauté, boil, and steam the leaves.

OTHER USES

Nipplewort flowers add color to your natural garden while attracting pollinators. Expect flowers between June and September.

CAUTION

As nipplewort is considered to be a noxious weed in many places, herbicide is often applied to areas where it grows. Use caution when collecting nipplewort, ensuring you forage only in areas where herbicides have not been applied.

Prickly Pear Cactus *Opuntia humifusa*

COMMON NAMES

Nopal, paddle cactus, prickly pear cactus, tuna

DESCRIPTION

This common cactus has flat, jointed pads with beautiful yellow flowers that develop into dull red fruits.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

The prickly pear's spines grow in tufts rather than as individual spikes.

FLAVOR

Young pads taste much like green beans, while the prickly pear cactus fruits have a lightly sweet, refreshing flavor.

HABITAT

You can find these plants throughout North America. They grow in desert locations, in areas where sand dunes are prevalent, and along rocky, mountainous slopes; they prefer dry, rocky soil with high sand content.

SEASON

Forage for pads during spring months, when spines are small. Forage for fruits from early summer to late autumn.

EDIBLE PARTS

Fruits and young pads.

COLLECTION

Leave the base pad intact and harvest the small pads farthest from the base. Follow the two-thirds rule when harvesting fruits.



PREPARATION

Peel the tough skin from the pads and fruits. Pads are best when cooked or pickled; fruits may be enjoyed raw or cooked.

OTHER USES

Native Americans helped speed wound healing by applying poultices made from prickly pear cactus flesh.

CAUTION

Always wear gloves when you harvest and peel prickly pears. Check yourself for ticks after harvesting, as these bloodsuckers often hide among

the cactus pads.

Purslane *Portulaca oleracea*

COMMON NAMES

Little hogweed, moss rose, pigweed, purslane, pursley, pussley, verdolaga

DESCRIPTION

Purslane has succulent oval leaves and smooth reddish stems. Its small yellow flowers have five petals.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Purslane grows in straggly, spreading bunches. Its flowers open only on sunny mornings, normally closing before noon.

FLAVOR

This highly coveted plant has a slightly salty, lemony taste.

HABITAT

This hardy plant is common throughout North America. Purslane thrives in rich soil with full sun, but it can be found along roadsides and trail sides, springing up from sidewalk cracks, and in waste areas.

SEASON

Purslane grows from early spring to late fall.

EDIBLE PARTS

Flowers, leaves, seeds, stems, and tips.

COLLECTION

Snip segments from mature plants, leaving one to two inches of growth near the roots.



PREPARATION

Purslane is a wonderfully refreshing addition to salads. It may also be sautéed, steamed, baked, or boiled.

OTHER USES

In the garden, purslane makes a useful ground cover. It has traditionally been used to treat headaches and digestive ailments.

CAUTION

When harvesting purslane, be sure to forage only in areas where herbicides are not used.

Sheep Sorrel *Rumex acetosella*

COMMON NAMES

Field sorrel, red sorrel, sheep sorrel, sour weed

DESCRIPTION

Sheep sorrel has green leaves shaped like small arrowheads. Its stems are deeply ridged, with a slight red tint, and its flowers are wine colored.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

This plant has tall, upright stems and is capable of reaching a maximum height of about eighteen inches.

FLAVOR

Sheep sorrel has a tangy flavor when young; older leaves have a strong, sour flavor.

HABITAT

Sheep sorrel is common throughout North America and is considered to be an invasive species in many places. It is widespread along roadways and trail sides, and in pastures, meadows, and parks. This plant requires full sun to thrive.

SEASON

Harvest young sheep sorrel leaves in early spring, and continue foraging for larger leaves through late summer.

EDIBLE PARTS

Though the entire plant is edible, only the leaves are palatable.



COLLECTION

Pick the leaves from plants or pick the entire plant for later processing.

PREPARATION

Sheep sorrel may be eaten raw in salads, and it is also very good when boiled, sautéed, steamed, or baked in casseroles.

OTHER USES

Tea made from sheep sorrel has traditionally been used to treat diarrhea.

CAUTION

As sheep sorrel is considered to be a weed in many places, it is often treated with herbicide. Use caution when foraging, ensuring you take plants from sites that have not been treated.

Shepherd's Purse *Capsella bursa-pastoris*

COMMON NAME

Shepherd's purse

DESCRIPTION

Shepherd's purse has triangular seed pods running the length of its stem. The leaves at the plant's base are reminiscent of dandelion leaves.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

This plant produces clusters of small white flowers with four petals apiece.

FLAVOR

When boiled, shepherd's purse leaves taste a bit like cabbage, but the raw leaves taste and smell like turnips. Older leaves take on a peppery taste. The plant's seedpods taste peppery, and the root is reminiscent of fresh ginger.

HABITAT

This plant can be found throughout North America. Shepherd's purse is a hardy plant that will thrive in nearly any sunny location.

SEASON

In most places, shepherd's purse can be found from early spring through late autumn. In warm climates, it is commonly found throughout the year.

EDIBLE PARTS

Leaves, roots, seedpods, and shoots.

COLLECTION

Dig the roots and pluck the leaves from plants. The entire plant may be harvested.



PREPARATION

Young leaves are good raw, in salads. Older leaves taste best when cooked. Seeds can be ground and are good roasted. Roots may be eaten raw or roasted.

OTHER USES

Tea made with shepherd's purse has traditionally been used to treat skin disorders.

CAUTION

Shepherd's purse is considered to be a weed in most places. Be sure to

harvest it only in areas where no herbicides are used.

Sow Thistle *Sonchus oleraceus*

COMMON NAMES

Hare lettuce, hare thistle, sow thistle

DESCRIPTION

The sow thistle has dandelion-like lower leaves as well as smooth leaves that grow up its slender stalk. Like dandelions, sow thistles produce white, milky sap.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

The edible sow thistle has yellow dandelion-like flowers.

FLAVOR

Young sow thistle leaves have a mild flavor, comparable to that of lettuce.

HABITAT

These hardy plants can be found throughout North America. Sow thistle thrives in open, sunny locations, including roadsides, trail sides, and fields.

SEASON

Look for young shoots in early spring, and continue harvesting into late summer when the plants are flowering.

EDIBLE PARTS

Forage for young shoots and leaves. Young roots are edible, as are peeled stems. However, these portions are not palatable and are usually eaten only in survival situations.

COLLECTION

Pick the leaves or cut them away from the roots with a knife.



PREPARATION

Young, tender sow thistle leaves are a fantastic addition to salads. The leaves may also be boiled, sautéed, or steamed.

OTHER USES

Historically, sap from sow thistles was used to treat warts.

CAUTION

There are many varieties of sow thistle. Only the smooth types should be consumed; those with thorns are inedible.

Watercress *Nasturtium officinale*

COMMON NAME

Watercress

DESCRIPTION

Watercress is an aquatic or semiaquatic plant with small leaves, green and white flowers, and hollow stems that enable it to float.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Watercress found in the wild tends to have a longer, leggier appearance than the compact varieties found in supermarkets.

FLAVOR

This delicious green has a spicy, tangy flavor.

HABITAT

This plant is common throughout North America, though it is noticeably absent from hot, desert environments. You'll find watercress in wetlands, slow-moving streams, and in and around natural springs.

SEASON

Forage for watercress during the spring.

EDIBLE PARTS

Though large watercress leaves are technically edible, they are bitter and unpalatable. Young leaves are best.

COLLECTION

Use scissors to snip leaves from plants.



PREPARATION

Watercress is eaten raw as an addition to salads or sandwiches.

OTHER USES

Because it has a high vitamin C content, watercress was traditionally used as a treatment for scurvy.

CAUTION

Harvest watercress from only unpolluted waters and wash it well before consuming. When grown in areas where manure is prevalent, this plant can harbor parasites, including liver flukes.

Wild Rose *Rosa arkansana*

COMMON NAMES

Prairie rose, wild prairie rose, wild rose

DESCRIPTION

These small shrubs are quite thorny, with small, bright green leaves and lots of fragrant pink flowers. Red rose hips develop after flowers fade.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Wild roses have five petals and bright yellow centers.

FLAVOR

The flowers are distinctly rosy, while the leaves have an herbal taste. Rose hips have an almost berrylike flavor but without the sweetness.

HABITAT

Wild roses are common throughout North America, though they are notably absent from arid desert environments. These flowers can be found in forests, along fences, along roadways, and near gardens and pathways.

SEASON

Forage for petals in springtime, and enjoy the leaves during spring and summer. Rose hips develop by late summer.

EDIBLE PARTS

The flowers, buds, and rose hips are edible. The leaves may be boiled for tea.

COLLECTION

Use garden shears to clip the desired parts from wild rose shrubs.



PREPARATION

Flowers, buds, and rose hips may be eaten raw, and they make a nice addition to salads. Rose hips can also be cooked or enjoyed in teas.

OTHER USES

Wild roses are excellent for scenting soaps, candles, and lotions.

CAUTION

Though rose hips may be picked, their stems can be thorny; wear gloves to protect your hands. As wild roses are often found in areas where herbicides are applied, take extra care to forage only for those that have

not been chemically treated.

Wild Violet *Viola odorata*

COMMON NAMES

English violet, garden violet, sweet violet, wild violet

DESCRIPTION

Wild violets grow in low, clumping masses. Their heart-shaped leaves form funnels that lead to the plants' stems.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

While flowers are typically purple, they can be white, blue, or a blend of all three colors.

FLAVOR

The leaves of the wild violet have a mild flavor when young but can be tough and bitter when fully mature. The flowers have a slightly sweet taste.

HABITAT

These hardy plants can be found throughout most hilly and mountainous regions of North America. They are absent from prairie and desert environments. Wild violets prefer shady areas. Look for them in parks, lawns, and woodlands.

SEASON

Forage for wild violets from very early spring, sometimes before all the snow melts, to late autumn. In mild climates, they can be harvested year-round.

EDIBLE PARTS

Flowers and leaves.



COLLECTION

Pick leaves and flowers as needed.

PREPARATION

Both leaves and flowers may be eaten raw. Leaves are also good boiled, steamed, and sautéed.

OTHER USES

Native Americans crushed wild violet roots for poultices, which were used to treat skin irritation.

CAUTION

Eating a lot of wild violet seeds can cause vomiting. Avoid seed pods.

Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*

COMMON NAMES

Butterfly leaves, wood sorrel, yellow wood sorrel

DESCRIPTION

Like clover, wood sorrel has three heart-shaped leaves. It is a low-lying plant that grows in clusters.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Wood sorrel has small flowers with five petals. While most are yellow, some plants have white or pink flowers.

FLAVOR

Wood sorrel has a bright, lemony flavor.

HABITAT

This hardy plant is common and widespread throughout North America. Wood sorrel is often found in gardens, on lawns, along pathways, and in meadows and fields. It prefers moist, partly shady locations.

SEASON

You can normally find an abundance of wood sorrel from early spring to late autumn. In warm climates, it is available year-round.

EDIBLE PARTS

Flowers, leaves, and stems.

COLLECTION

Use scissors to snip the desired portions of the plant, or simply pick leaves and flowers.



PREPARATION

Wood sorrel makes a nice trailside nibble, and it is also excellent in salads. It may be boiled, steamed, or sautéed, too.

OTHER USES

Herbalists use a decoction (a concentrated liquid) of wood sorrel to treat fevers. When crushed, the plant's leaves have an astringent effect that makes them useful for treating minor wounds.

CAUTION

Wood sorrel contains high levels of oxalic acid. People with gout, arthritis,

rheumatism, or bladder or kidney problems should avoid consumption.

Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*

COMMON NAMES

Devil's nettle, gordaldo, nosebleed plant, old man's pepper, plumajillo, soldier's woundwort, thousand-leaf, thousand-seal, yarrow

DESCRIPTION

Yarrow has soft, feathery leaves and masses of white flowers on stems that can grow to be a little more than three feet tall.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

This plant has a strong camphor odor.

FLAVOR

Yarrow is lightly sweet with a slightly bitter tang.

HABITAT

Yarrow is found throughout North America. It is common from sea level to an elevation of about 11,500 feet. Yarrow is an extremely hardy plant that can grow almost anywhere. It tends to prefer open, sunny locations with well-drained soil.

SEASON

Forage for yarrow in spring and early summer. In areas where it grows year-round, it is often possible to find young plants during the autumn months.

EDIBLE PARTS

While the plant's stems and older leaves are bitter and woody, young yarrow leaves are delicious. Some people enjoy the taste of the flowers.



COLLECTION

Pick small leaves from plants as desired.

PREPARATION

Yarrow is most enjoyable when cooked. It can be steamed, sautéed, or boiled.

OTHER USES

Yarrow is often used for medicinal purposes. Fresh leaves encourage clotting when crushed; they can be used to staunch mild bleeding.

CAUTION

Yarrow is commonly found in areas where herbicides are used. Forage only in areas that have not been treated with chemicals.

Yellow Rocket *Barbarea vulgaris*

COMMON NAMES

Bitter cress, common cress, Indian posey, land cress, Saint Barbara herb, scurvy cress, upland cress, winter cress, yellow rocket

DESCRIPTION

Yellow rocket has long, lobed leaves at its base. A tall, fibrous stem with sparse leaves rises up to bear clumps of bright yellow flowers with four petals apiece.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

This abundant plant usually grows in masses.

FLAVOR

This member of the mustard family tastes best in early spring, when its leaves have a flavor similar to turnip greens.

HABITAT

Yellow rocket is found throughout North America. It is commonly found in waste areas, along roadways, near paths and trails, and in fields and pastures.

SEASON

Forage for leaves in early spring before the flowers appear. Later, harvest the broccoli-like buds. In some areas, it may be available all year.

EDIBLE PARTS

Though yellow rocket's flowers are not poisonous, they are not enjoyable. Young leaves and buds have the best flavor.



COLLECTION

Pluck leaves and buds from plants as available.

PREPARATION

While a small amount of raw yellow rocket is harmless, eating more than a few bites can lead to embarrassing gas. This plant is most enjoyable when boiled, sautéed, or thoroughly steamed.

OTHER USES

Herbalists have traditionally used yellow rocket tea to treat coughs.

CAUTION

Yellow rocket is extremely hardy, and is capable of storing herbicides and other contaminants that often kill other plants. Be very careful to harvest it only from areas where toxins are not present.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Edible Plant Recipes and Remedies

Once you have gathered plants, the fun of using them begins. Just like common vegetables and grains, wild plants can be used in a variety of ways. While they are often quite tasty when prepared using very basic methods, they are transformed when used in creative recipes.

Many of the wild plants showcased in this book aren't just edible; they also have medicinal properties that make them useful for inclusion in simple remedies for such common ailments as insect bites and sore throats. These remedies are easy to prepare using just a few ingredients you may already have on hand.

This fantastic selection of recipes includes such delicacies as preserves and pickles along with refreshing salads, gourmet side dishes, and delectable appetizers. You'll find recipes that will allow you to make the most of each plant included in this book, ensuring that you can proudly share the fruits of your labor with friends and family.

Once you have familiarized yourself with the delightful flavors and textures these plants have to offer, you will find that they lend themselves wonderfully to many of your favorite recipes. Cooking with wild plants is always an adventure—one that is both exciting and enjoyable.

Amaranth

Amaranth Sore Throat Gargle

MAKES ABOUT 16 TABLESPOONS

If you are suffering from a sore throat and prefer a natural remedy for soothing it, try this amaranth gargle.

1 cup fresh or 3 tablespoons dried chopped amaranth

1 cup water

Boil the amaranth in the water for no more than 5 minutes, then allow the mixture to cool.

Pour it through a strainer, reserving the liquid and discarding the plant matter.

Gargle with 2 tablespoons of liquid at a time. Keep the liquid in a sealed container between uses.

Amaranth Greens with Roasted Garlic

SERVES 4

Look for young plants with tender stems; if there are budding flowers, it's too mature to be tasty. This garlicky sauté is rich in iron, protein, and calcium.

6 to 8 garlic cloves, peeled

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon sea salt, plus additional for seasoning

Freshly ground pepper

4 cups amaranth greens, large stems removed

2 tablespoons water

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Place the garlic cloves on a square of foil, drizzle 1 tablespoon of olive oil over them, and season them with salt and pepper. Wrap the garlic in the foil and place in the oven for 40 to 45 minutes. Remove the garlic and let it cool.

Place a large skillet over medium-high heat. When it is hot, add the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil and the garlic. Cook until the garlic is golden brown.

Add the amaranth greens. Sprinkle with $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of salt and add the water. Cover and cook for 2 minutes to let the greens steam and soften.

Remove the cover and toss the greens to coat with the garlic and oil, continuing to cook for 1 more minute.

Serve hot or at room temperature.

Amaranth Vegetable Curry

SERVES 4 TO 6

Often used in Asian and Caribbean cooking, amaranth can be used in recipes as a substitution for spinach, Swiss chard, or tender kale, and the young leaves can also be eaten raw. This quick curry makes a delicious side dish or vegetarian entrée when served over a whole grain such as quinoa or millet.

1 tablespoon unsalted butter

1 small onion, peeled and chopped

4 shitake mushrooms, stems removed and sliced

2 garlic cloves, chopped

1 large carrot, peeled, halved, and cut into $\frac{1}{4}$ -
inch slices

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon sea salt

1 teaspoon curry powder

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon turmeric

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper

2 medium zucchini, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch cubes

4 cups amaranth leaves, large stems removed and
patted dry

Place a large skillet over medium-high heat. When it is hot, add 1
tablespoon of butter.

When the butter has melted, add the onion, mushrooms, and garlic, and
sauté until the onion is soft, about 5 minutes.

Add the carrots, salt, curry powder, turmeric, and cayenne, and cook until
the carrots are tender, about 5 minutes.

Add the zucchini and a little more butter if the pan is dry. Cook for 2 to 3
minutes, then add the amaranth.

Cook until the zucchini has softened and the amaranth is tender, about 3
minutes. Serve immediately.

Arrowroot

Itch Remedy

MAKES 1 TREATMENT

Minor itches, such as those caused by insect bites, can be soothed with this simple itch remedy made with natural arrowroot.

1 arrowroot

Boil the arrowroot, then drain and allow the arrowroot to cool. Once it is cool, mash it into a paste.

Apply one dab of the paste to each bug bite and allow it to dry on the skin. Reapply as needed for soothing relief.

Roasted Arrowroot

SERVES 4

While arrowroot powder is used as a thickener and to make gluten-free baked goods such as cookies and biscuits, the unprocessed tubers, when roasted, have a wonderful flavor reminiscent of parsnips. Use them in place of potatoes in any recipe.

4 arrowroots

Butter

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Preheat the oven to 250°F.

Peel the arrowroots and place them in a baking dish.

Bake the arrowroots for about 3 hours, until the roots are tender. Season

with butter, salt, and pepper. Serve hot.

Bay Laurel

Bath Soak

MAKES 1 BATH

Bay laurel is a wonderful remedy for body aches. Next time you've overdone it, try this simple soak.

1 handful fresh or dried bay laurel leaves

Draw a steaming-hot bath. Add the bay laurel leaves and wait at least 5 minutes, until the water is a comfortable temperature. Soak until the bath cools.

Lentil Salad with Goat Cheese

SERVES 6

Fragrant bay laurel leaves can be harvested any time of the year. Here their astringent flavor complements the earthy lentils.

FOR THE DRESSING:

3 tablespoons red wine vinegar

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

1 garlic clove, minced

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon sea salt

Pinch of freshly ground pepper

6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

FOR THE LENTILS:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cups dry lentils, rinsed and picked over

1 medium carrot, peeled and diced

1 shallot, peeled and diced

1 bay leaf

2 garlic cloves, diced

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt

1 roasted red pepper, diced

1 tablespoon fresh or 1 teaspoon dried chopped thyme

1 tablespoon fresh or $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon dried chopped oregano

2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

8 ounces goat cheese, crumbled

Freshly ground pepper

Red wine vinegar

To make the dressing:

In a small jar, combine the vinegar, mustard, garlic, salt, pepper, and olive oil. Screw on the top and shake well to combine.

Taste the dressing and adjust the seasonings if necessary; the dressing should be tart.

To make the lentils:

In a medium saucepan, combine the lentils, carrot, shallot, bay leaf, garlic, and salt. Add water to just cover the lentils, and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer until the lentils are tender, about 20 minutes.

Drain the lentil mixture and place it in a bowl. Remove the bay leaf.

Pour the dressing over the lentils. Stir gently to combine.

Add the red pepper, thyme, oregano, and parsley. Add half the goat cheese, and season with pepper and vinegar. Fold to combine the ingredients.

Taste and adjust the seasonings, adding black pepper and more red wine vinegar if necessary. Garnish with the remaining goat cheese. Serve immediately.

Pork Adobo

SERVES 4 TO 6

Bay leaves can be used fresh or dried. They are intensely flavored, and rarely are more than three or four needed to flavor a dish. They are an essential ingredient in this traditional Filipino stew, which should be served with plenty of white rice to absorb the tangy sauce.

1 tablespoon neutral vegetable oil, such as canola

3 pounds pork shoulder, cut into 1½-inch cubes

½ cup soy sauce

½ cup distilled white vinegar, plus additional for seasoning (optional)

1 cup coconut milk

3 to 5 bay leaves

1 teaspoon whole black peppercorns

8 to 10 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed

Sea salt

Chopped scallions, for garnish

In a high-sided skillet or Dutch oven, heat the oil until it begins to simmer. Working in batches, brown the pork well on all sides, about 2 minutes per

side.

After all the pork has been browned, return all the meat to the pan. Add the soy sauce, vinegar, coconut milk, bay leaves, peppercorns, and crushed garlic, and season with salt. Stir all ingredients to combine.

Bring to a boil and then lower the heat to a simmer. Cook covered for about 2½ hours, until the pork is tender and still holds its shape.

Remove the pork from the pan and set it aside. Pour the sauce into a measuring cup or glass bowl and skim off the fat.

Return the sauce to the pan and boil it until it is reduced to about 1 cup. Remove the bay leaves.

Taste and season with more salt and vinegar, if necessary.

Return the pork to the pan and cook until it is heated through. Serve garnished with chopped scallions.

Minestrone

SERVES 6 TO 8

Bay leaves can be stored in a cool, dry place in a sealed container for up to a year. The whole leaf is not edible and should be removed from a dish before serving. If you prefer a vegetarian version of this minestrone, just leave out the bacon, and use water instead of stock.

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 large onion, peeled and sliced

1/4 pound bacon, chopped

4 celery stalks, chopped

2 garlic cloves, chopped

2 medium carrots, peeled and chopped

2 waxy potatoes, peeled and cubed

8 cups water or stock

1 tablespoon tomato paste

1 (14-ounce) can cannellini beans, drained and rinsed

2 bay leaves

1 teaspoon fresh thyme

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped fresh parsley

1 (14-ounce) can chopped tomatoes

4 ounces small pasta, such as ditalini or elbows

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Freshly grated Parmesan cheese, for garnish

Slivered fresh basil, for garnish

In a pot or Dutch oven, heat the oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion, bacon, celery, garlic, and carrots, and cook for 3 to 5 minutes, until softened.

Add the potatoes and cook for another 2 to 3 minutes.

Add the water or stock and bring the mixture to a boil. Add the tomato paste and stir to combine. Lower the heat to a simmer and cook for 15 to 20 minutes.

Add the cannellini beans, bay leaves, thyme, parsley, chopped tomatoes, and pasta. Cook until the pasta is tender, about 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Sprinkle with the Parmesan and basil and serve with more Parmesan on the side.

Cat's Ear

Cat's Ear Coffee

SERVES 1

When you are in the mood for a toasty caffeine-free beverage, give cat's ear coffee a try.

3 cat's ear roots

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Thinly slice the roots and roast them for at least 30 minutes, until the slices are toasted and completely dry. Watch carefully to ensure the roots do not burn.

Allow the root slices to cool. Grind the slices in a coffee grinder or food processor and then brew them as you would coffee.

Add a little milk and sugar to the resulting beverage, if you like.

Crispy Beans and Greens

SERVES 2

Cat's ears resemble dandelions; they bear multiple yellow flowers. They are slightly less bitter than dandelions. Mature leaves, which appear after the plant blooms, must be cooked to tenderize them.

3 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus additional
for garnish

1 red onion, sliced

1 teaspoon sea salt

1 garlic clove, minced

1 (14-ounce) can cannellini beans, rinsed and drained

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound cat's ears greens, sliced thinly crosswise

1 teaspoon smoked paprika

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

Heat a teaspoon of olive oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onions and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of salt, and cook until the onions are soft and golden, about 5 minutes.

Add the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Move the mixture to a bowl.

Add the remaining 2 teaspoons of oil to the pan. When it is hot, add the beans in a single layer. Cook for 2 to 3 minutes without stirring; then stir and spread the beans evenly over the pan again. Repeat until the beans are crispy all over, adjusting the heat to avoid burning the beans.

Add the cat's ears, smoked paprika, and the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of salt to the beans. Stir until the greens are wilted and tender, about 5 minutes.

Add the onion mixture and red wine vinegar; stir and taste. Adjust the seasoning if necessary.

Serve immediately, drizzled with extra-virgin olive oil.

Savory Green Ricotta Pie

SERVES 4 TO 6

Cat's ears are a spring green and are rich in minerals and antioxidants. Accompanied by a simple green salad dressed with lemon juice and olive oil and a crusty baguette, this elegant green and yellow pie is the perfect spring brunch dish.

Extra-virgin olive oil

4 eggs, beaten

8 ounces whole milk or part-skim ricotta cheese (do not use fat-free)

4 ounces pecorino cheese, grated

1 (9-ounce) package frozen artichoke hearts, thawed, drained, and roughly chopped

$\frac{1}{4}$ pound cat's ear greens, roughly chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt

1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Lightly grease a 9-inch springform pan with olive oil.

In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, ricotta, and pecorino cheese. Stir in the artichokes, cat's ears, salt, and pepper. Pour the mixture into the prepared springform pan and drizzle with more olive oil.

Place the pan in the oven and bake for 45 to 50 minutes, until the pie is set. Cool it on a rack for 10 to 15 minutes.

Run a knife around the inside edge of the pan and then remove the side of the pan. Serve the pie hot or at room temperature.

Cattail

First Aid Ointment

MAKES 1 TREATMENT

For minor cuts and insect bites, especially while spending time in an area where fresh young cattails are present, try this Native American remedy.

3 or 4 small fresh cattail leaves

Slice a cattail leaf open and apply the fresh jelly to your scratch, cut, or insect bite. Keep the extra leaves with you and use them later as needed.

Cattail Pollen Biscuits

MAKES 9 BISCUITS

Cattails grow in dense stands in muddy, marshy places. To gather the pollen, place a large plastic bag over the head of the plant and shake; repeat until you have as much as you need. Cattail pollen is bright yellow, and it gives a beautiful golden color to baked goods. It's also high in protein.

1/4 cup cattail pollen, sifted

1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour, plus additional for dusting

1 tablespoon non-aluminum baking powder

1/4 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon sea salt

4 tablespoons cold lard, unsalted butter, or shortening, cubed

3/4 cup buttermilk

2 tablespoons butter, melted

Preheat the oven to 425°F.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the cattail pollen, flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.

Using your fingers, a pastry cutter, or two knives, cut the fat into the flour mixture until it resembles coarse cornmeal, with some pea-size bits.

Slowly stir in the buttermilk until you have a shaggy dough forms. Don't overmix or the biscuits will develop a tough texture when baked.

Dust a clean surface with flour and turn the dough out. Gently knead 3 or 4 times and pat it out into a square about 1 inch thick.

Cut the dough into 9 squares and place them all about 2 inches apart on the prepared baking sheet. Brush the tops of the biscuits with the melted butter.

Bake for 20 minutes, until the biscuits have risen and the tops are golden brown. Serve immediately.

Wild Rice Pilaf with Cattail Hearts

SERVES 6 TO 8

You will need fifteen to twenty cattail shoots for this recipe. Look for shoots that haven't flowered. Pull off and discard the tough outer leaves until you reach the white core. Grab the soft heart and pull it out. Cut off any tough parts. Wash and dry the cores and chop them into bite-size pieces.

About 1 cup chopped cattail hearts

4 cups water or stock

2 cups wild rice

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped scallions, white and green parts

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried cranberries

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped pecans

2 teaspoons fresh thyme or 1 teaspoon dried thyme

1 teaspoon lemon zest

Juice of $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon

Chop the cleaned cattail hearts. You should have about 1 cup.

In a medium saucepan, combine the water and wild rice and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer for about 20 minutes.

Heat the oil in a shallow pan. Add the cattail hearts and scallions, and cook until the scallions are translucent, about 5 minutes.

Stir in the cranberries, pecans, thyme, lemon zest, and lemon juice, and cook until the mixture is heated through, about 3 minutes.

When the wild rice has cooked, add the cattail mixture to it and toss to combine. Serve warm.

Chamomile

Chamomile Cocktail

SERVES 4

Next time you're craving a cocktail, try this refreshing recipe.

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh chamomile flowers

6 tablespoons boiling water

8 tablespoons honey

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup fresh lemon juice

16 ounces dry gin

4 cups ice cubes

Chamomile leaves and lemon slices, for garnish

Mix the chamomile flowers with the boiling water and steep for 3 minutes.

Add the honey and mash the chamomile while stirring with a stout spoon.

Allow the mixture to cool, then strain it into a pitcher through a fine sieve.

Add the lemon juice, gin, and ice, and stir until the ice melts.

Pour the drink into 4 glasses, garnish with chamomile leaves and lemon slices, and serve.

Chamomile Lemonade

SERVES 6

Wild chamomile is an annual herb. The flowers can be used fresh or dried; fresh flowers should be used immediately.

3/4 cup sugar

Zest of 1 lemon

5 cups water

6 tablespoons fresh or dried chamomile flowers

3/4 cup fresh lemon juice

In a saucepan over medium heat, add the sugar, lemon zest, and 2 cups of water. Bring to a boil, stirring, for 2 to 3 minutes.

Turn off the heat and add the chamomile flowers. Set aside to cool completely.

Strain the chamomile sugar syrup into a 2-quart pitcher. Add the lemon juice and the remaining 3 cups of water. Chill, covered, until ready to serve.

Serve the lemonade over ice. It may be stored in the refrigerator up to 5 days.

Chamomile Cookies

MAKES 2 DOZEN COOKIES

The floral flavor of chamomile stands out in these fragrant, buttery cookies. Be sure to use confectioners' sugar here; it makes a difference. These cookies can be enjoyed with a cup of chamomile tea.

3 tablespoons loose chamomile tea

2 cups whole-wheat flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt

3/4 cup confectioners' sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

2 sticks (1 cup) butter, at room temperature

If the chamomile tea is not finely ground, pulse it once or twice in a spice grinder.

In the bowl of a food processor, place the tea, flour, and salt. Pulse to combine.

Add the confectioners' sugar, vanilla, and butter. Pulse until the dough just comes together.

Place the dough on a piece of plastic wrap or wax paper and form it into a log about 2 to 2½ inches across. Twist each wrap end tightly to seal the roll; then chill the roll in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes.

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Line a cookie sheet (or 2) with parchment paper.

Remove the dough from the refrigerator and cut it into ¼-inch-thick slices. Place the slices on the prepared cookie sheet and bake until the edges of the cookies are just beginning to brown, about 11 to 13 minutes.

Let the cookies cool on the sheet for 5 minutes, and then transfer them to a wire rack to cool to room temperature.

Berries with Chamomile Cream

SERVES 4 TO 6

Both the flowers and leaves of chamomile are edible, though they differ in taste. The flowers have a slight apple taste. Both are a tasty addition to salads or can be brewed as a tea.

1 cup heavy cream (not ultra-pasteurized)

4 teaspoons fresh or 2 teaspoons dried chamomile flowers

2 pints mixed berries (raspberries, blueberries,

strawberries, blackberries)

3 tablespoons sugar

In a small saucepan over medium heat, cook $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of heavy cream until small bubbles form around the edges of the pan. Turn off the heat and add the chamomile flowers. Transfer the mixture to a covered bowl and chill in the refrigerator until cold, at least 2 hours.

In a medium bowl, toss the berries with 2 tablespoons of sugar until they are coated. Set aside until you are ready to serve.

Remove the chamomile cream from the refrigerator and strain it into a medium bowl. Add the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of heavy cream and 1 teaspoon of sugar. Using a whisk or electric mixer, beat the cream until soft peaks form. Do not overbeat.

Divide the berries between 4 to 6 bowls and spoon the cream over the top of the berries. Serve immediately.

Chickweed

Chickweed Pesto

SERVES 4

Fresh pesto is a delicious condiment for pasta, sandwiches, and on other foods.

2 cups chickweed, finely chopped

3 garlic cloves, peeled

3 tablespoons pine nuts

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Combine all ingredients in a food processor or blender. Process until well-blended, and enjoy immediately. This pesto can be refrigerated for up to 1 week or frozen for as long as 6 months.

Chickweed Chimichurri

MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS

The whole chickweed plant, except for the roots, can be harvested and eaten.

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chickweed leaves and stems, finely chopped

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh oregano, finely chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup fresh lemon juice

2 scallions, white and green parts, finely chopped

4 garlic cloves, minced

$\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon sea salt

In a nonreactive bowl, combine all the ingredients and stir well. Let the mixture stand for at least 15 minutes to allow the flavors to blend.

Serve with grilled meat or fish.

Chickweed Pie

SERVES 6 TO 8

Chickweed is best when it's young and bright green. To prepare chickweed, remove all leaves, twigs, and root ends, reserving only the greenest, leafiest parts. Rinse it thoroughly in a colander and gently dry it with paper towels before chopping and measuring it for the recipe.

1 (10-inch) piecrust

3 cups finely chopped chickweed

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup diced bacon

1 cup finely chopped onion

3 eggs, lightly beaten

$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups full-fat Greek yogurt

1 tablespoon all-purpose flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon white pepper

Preheat the oven to 325°F.

Line a baking sheet with foil or parchment paper. Fit the crust into a 10-inch pie dish; make a raised edge to keep the filling from running over.

Place the chickweed in a medium bowl.

In a skillet over medium-high heat, fry the bacon until it begins to brown. Add the onion, and cook until soft, about 5 minutes. With a slotted spoon, transfer the bacon and onion to the bowl with the chickweed.

In a small bowl, beat the eggs until they are lemon colored, then add the yogurt, flour, nutmeg, salt, and pepper.

Add the egg mixture to the chickweed and mix well.

Spread the filling evenly in the pie shell and pat down firmly with a spoon.

Place the dish on the prepared baking sheet and bake for 45 to 50 minutes, or until the pie has set in the center and the top looks golden. Slice and serve warm.

Chicory

Coffee with Chicory

SERVES 6

In New Orleans, chicory-flavored coffee is a favorite. The roasted and ground taproot is what gives the coffee at Café du Monde its distinctive flavor. Try this bold, delicious brew hot or over ice.

1 large chicory root

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound coarsely ground coffee

6 cups water

$1\frac{1}{2}$ ounces simple syrup

Milk to taste

Preheat the oven to 325°F.

Roast the chicory root for 30 to 45 minutes, until it is brown. Remove it from the oven and chop it into fine chunks.

Combine chicory, coffee, and water in a stockpot. Stir it well, then cover it and allow the mixture to steep at room temperature for 8 to 12 hours.

Pour the mixture through a strainer into a large mason jar and then add the simple syrup. Cover the mason jar with a tight lid and shake it well to combine.

Mix in milk and more sweetener if desired. Most people prefer half chicory coffee and half milk.

This concentrate can be kept in the refrigerator for up to 2 days.

Chicory “Coffee”

MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS

If you’re looking for that New Orleans flavor without the caffeine, chicory makes a great hot beverage all by itself.

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound chicory roots

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Line a baking sheet with foil.

Slice the roots into thin disks. Place the sliced roots on the baking sheet and bake until they are dark brown, brittle, and fragrant, stirring occasionally. This may take 1 hour or longer, depending on your oven.

Remove the baking sheet from the oven and allow the roots to cool on the baking sheet. Grind to the desired consistency in a coffee grinder.

Brew as you would coffee, using 1 teaspoon of powder per cup of boiling water.

Wild Chicory and Fava Bean Puree

SERVES 4

Chicory leaves are highly nutritious; they are a good source of vitamins and minerals.

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus additional for garnish

$\frac{1}{2}$ medium onion, thinly sliced

1 garlic clove, chopped

1 medium tomato, chopped

2 (15-ounce) cans fava beans, rinsed and drained

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

2 pounds wild chicory leaves

Place the olive oil, onion, and garlic in a heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high heat, and sauté the ingredients until the onion is translucent, about 5 minutes.

Add the tomato and cook for 1 minute.

Add the beans and cook until the beans are very soft, mashing them while you stir. Season with salt and pepper and reduce the heat to keep the beans warm.

Place the chicory leaves in a large pot on medium-high heat. Season them with salt. The chicory will cook in the water that clings to the rinsed leaves. Cook until the ribs of the leaves are soft and most of the water has been absorbed.

Spoon the beans into a serving dish and mound the chicory in the center. Drizzle the puree with extra-virgin olive oil and serve with toasted bread.

Common Mallow

Pain-Relief Poultice

MAKES 1 POULTICE

If you are suffering from a mild rash, mosquito bites, or other insect bites, try this Native American pain-relief poultice.

1 cup water

6 handfuls common mallow

Boil the water and slowly add the mallow to the pot. Boil for about 1 minute, until the mallow has wilted, and then pour off the water and mash the mallow.

Allow the plant matter to cool; then cover the affected area with it. Use a large piece of cloth to hold the poultice in place. Use the entire poultice for the affected area.

Bakoula Salad with Preserved Lemons and Olives

SERVES 3 TO 4

Bakoula is the Arabic word for a vegetable known as Moroccan spinach—actually, common mallow. Mallow grows wild in Morocco and around the Mediterranean.

1 preserved lemon rind, quartered

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound (about 8 cups, packed) mallow leaves, stems removed

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup water

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped parsley

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped cilantro

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

$1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons paprika

$1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons cumin

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper

2 tablespoons lemon juice

Pulp from the preserved lemon, finely chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup green olives

Slice one-quarter of the preserved lemon into strips. Set aside.

Place the mallow leaves in a saucepan with the water over medium-high heat, and cook, stirring occasionally, for 15 to 20 minutes, until the leaves are very tender.

Pour the leaves into a colander and squeeze out the excess liquid by pressing a spoon against the leaves.

Transfer the mallow to a skillet set over medium-high heat and add the olive oil, parsley, cilantro, garlic, paprika, cumin, salt, cayenne, lemon juice, three-quarters of the preserved lemon rind, and the lemon pulp.

Stir to combine the ingredients and cook for 5 to 7 minutes, until the parsley and cilantro are wilted and the mixture is heated through.

Serve hot or at room temperature, garnished with the olives and preserved lemon slices.

Celery and Mallow Harira

SERVES 3 TO 4

High in calcium and magnesium, common mallow is also a good source of vitamins A and C. Harira is a traditional soup from northwest Africa.

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 medium onion, chopped

2 garlic cloves, chopped

2 large celery ribs, with leaves, chopped

1 teaspoon cinnamon

1 teaspoon turmeric

1 teaspoon smoked paprika

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

1-inch piece fresh ginger root, grated

1 (15-ounce) can chopped tomatoes

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup uncooked lentils

1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed

8 cups water

1 cup common mallow leaves, chopped

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

3 to 4 lemon wedges

Heat a Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the olive oil, onions, and garlic, and cook until the onions are translucent, about 5 minutes.

Add the celery and cook for 3 to 5 minutes. Add the cinnamon, turmeric, smoked paprika, nutmeg, and grated ginger. Stir until the onion and celery are coated in the spices.

Add the tomatoes, lentils, and chickpeas, and cook for 5 minutes.

Add the water and bring to a boil. Lower the heat to a simmer and cook for 30 to 40 minutes, until the lentils are tender. You may need to add more water.

Add the mallow leaves and season with salt and pepper. Simmer for 5 to 10 minutes, until the leaves are wilted.

Serve hot. Squeeze lemon wedges into the soup as desired.

Curly Dock

Cold Remedy Tea

SERVES 1

When you feel a cold coming on, give this curly dock cold tea a try; it's very high in the vitamin C your immune system needs.

1 curly dock root

16 ounces boiling water

Scrub the root well and peel it. Chop it into small pieces and add it to the boiling water.

Allow the mixture to steep for at least 10 minutes; then strain the root pieces from the water.

Sweeten the tea with a little honey if desired.

Curly Dock Cream Cheese Spread

MAKES 1½ CUPS

The lemony flavor of curly dock leaves works well in this spread for bagels or crackers.

2 cups curly dock leaves

1 small onion, finely chopped

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

8 ounces full-fat or low-fat cream cheese, at room temperature

2 tablespoons plain Greek yogurt, plus more, if needed

Cut the dock leaves into thin ribbons. Set aside.

In a skillet over medium-high heat, sauté the onion and garlic in the olive oil until soft and golden, about 5 minutes.

Add the dock leaves and cook until the leaves are tender, about 5 to 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, and allow the leaves to cool completely.

In a medium bowl, combine the cream cheese, yogurt, and cooled dock leaf mixture until well blended.

Dock Seed Crackers

MAKES ABOUT 24 CRACKERS

The brown seeds of curly dock are high in riboflavin, calcium, and fiber. When you bring the seeds home, remove any leaves, stems, or insects. Grind the seeds to a flour in a blender or spice grinder. Store the seeds in a paper bag and the dock seed flour in a glass jar.

1 cup dock seed flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup whole-wheat flour, plus additional for dusting

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup dark rye flour

1 teaspoon sea salt

Water, at room temperature

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Line a baking sheet with parchment flour.

Combine the dock seed flour, whole-wheat flour, rye flour, and salt in a medium bowl.

Slowly add water, stirring, until you have a pliable but not sticky dough.

Dust a clean, flat surface generously with flour. Roll out the dough as thinly as possible and cut it into the desired shapes. Transfer the crackers to the prepared baking sheet.

Bake for 10 to 12 minutes, or until crisp. Cool the crackers on a rack and store them for up to 1 week in an airtight container.

Curly Dock Frittata

SERVES 4

The young leaves of curly dock are among the first greens of spring. They are high in vitamins A and C and minerals.

1 medium onion, chopped

1 garlic clove, chopped

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 cup curly dock leaves

1 cup parsley, chopped

1 cup dill, chopped

8 eggs, lightly beaten

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

In a small nonstick ovenproof skillet, sauté the onion and garlic in the olive oil over medium-high heat until soft, about 5 minutes.

Add the dock leaves and cook until they are wilted, about 5 minutes.

In a medium bowl, add the parsley and dill to the eggs, season with salt and pepper, and pour the mixture into the pan.

Lower the heat to medium. Cook, undisturbed, for 3 to 5 minutes, until the bottom is set. Transfer the pan to the oven and cook until the eggs are set. Run the pan under the broiler briefly to brown the top, if desired.

Serve hot or at room temperature.

Dandelion

75 and Sunny Dandelion Gin Cocktail

SERVES 1

In the mood for something different? Try this delightful dandelion-infused gin cocktail.

4 fresh dandelion leaves

2 teaspoons honey, plus additional as desired

4 teaspoons yellow chartreuse liqueur

3 ounces gin

8 dashes Dr. Adam Elmegirab's Dandelion & Burdock
Bitters

1 ounce fresh lemon juice

Ice

Club soda

Muddle the dandelion leaves in a shaker with the honey and chartreuse. Add the gin, bitters, and lemon juice; then fill the remaining space in the shaker with ice.

Shake, then strain the liquid into tall glasses filled with ice. Top off with club soda.

Dandelion Salad

SERVES 4

Dandelions can be found almost anywhere, including an otherwise perfect lawn; they love sunny, open spaces.

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil

4 ounces (about 8 cups) dandelion greens, large leaves torn into pieces

1 hardboiled egg, diced

2 slices bacon, diced and cooked until crisp

In a small jar with a lid, combine the garlic, lemon juice, mustard, salt, and olive oil. Shake well. Set aside for 15 minutes to let the flavors combine.

Place the greens in a salad bowl. Add the hardboiled egg and bacon. Pour the dressing over all and toss. Serve immediately.

Pickled Dandelion Buds

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

Every part of the dandelion plant can be used. The pickled buds are an interesting substitute for capers. Use the tiny, tightly closed buds found in the early spring. These pickled buds must be made about two and a half weeks in advance, but it's worth the wait.

1 cup dandelion buds, sepals removed

1 cup water

2 teaspoons pickling salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon juniper berries

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon whole allspice

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon whole peppercorns

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon whole white coriander seeds

1 bay leaf (laurel)

1 garlic clove

1 cup white wine vinegar, plus more if needed

Place the dandelion buds in a nonreactive, heat-resistant container.

In a small saucepan, bring the water to a boil. Add the salt and stir until dissolved.

Pour the boiling water over the buds. Allow the buds to cool to room temperature; cover and refrigerate the buds for 3 days.

Place the juniper berries, allspice, peppercorns, coriander, bay leaf, and garlic in a sterilized heatproof jar.

Strain the dandelion buds and discard the brine. Add the buds to the jar.

In a small saucepan, bring the vinegar to a boil and immediately pour it over the dandelion buds. They should be covered completely.

Cover the jar, allow it to cool to room temperature, and store it in the refrigerator for at least 2 weeks before using.

Roasted Almond Dandelion Pesto

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

Dandelion greens must be washed very well. Blanching makes them tender and less bitter.

1 bunch (about 2 cups) dandelion leaves

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup roasted almonds

3 garlic cloves, minced

1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil

1/2 teaspoon sea salt

Freshly ground pepper

Fill a small saucepan with water and bring it to a boil. Plunge the dandelion greens into the water and blanch them for 30 seconds. Drain the leaves and press out as much water as possible.

In the bowl of a food processor, pulse the almonds and garlic together until finely chopped.

Add the dandelion greens and pulse until combined.

Add the cheese, vinegar, and olive oil, and process until well combined, scraping down the sides of the bowl occasionally. Add the salt and season with pepper. Use immediately.

Elder

Elderflower Champagne Cocktail

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

Make a springtime brunch extra special with this delightful cocktail, or enjoy it on a warm afternoon.

1 handful fresh elderflowers

4 tablespoons honey

16 ounces club soda

16 ounces brut champagne or sparkling wine

Muddle the elderflowers with the honey and add 8 ounces of club soda.

Strain the liquid into a pitcher through a sieve, then add the remaining 8 ounces of club soda and the champagne. Pour the cocktail into 4 glasses and enjoy.

Elderflower Vinegar

MAKES ABOUT 1 QUART

Gather the flowers when they are most fragrant by breaking the stalk at the cluster's base. Remove the individual flowers by hand when you get home.

2 cups elderflowers

2 scallions, chopped

2 garlic cloves, chopped

1 bay leaf (laurel)

1/4 teaspoon black peppercorns

20 sprigs fresh thyme

4 cups apple cider vinegar

Preheat the oven to 225°F.

Wash a large glass jar and its lid, and dry them completely. Place the jar and lid on a baking sheet and bake for 20 minutes to sterilize. Allow the jar and lid to cool completely before using.

Put the elderflowers, scallions, garlic, bay leaf, peppercorns, and thyme into the jar. Pour in the vinegar, making sure all the ingredients are submerged. Seal the jar.

Keep the jar in a cool, dark place for 6 weeks.

Strain the vinegar into smaller bottles and seal. The vinegar will keep for up to 1 year if stored in a cool, dark place.

Almond Milk with Elderflowers

MAKES 1 QUART

Elderflowers have a light and delicate flavor. They also contain phytonutrients, including antioxidants, and have anti-inflammatory properties.

2 cups elderflowers

4 cups water

1 cup blanched almonds

2 dates, pitted

Pinch of sea salt

Place the elderflowers in a heatproof container.

In a medium pot, bring the water to a boil, and then pour it over the elderflowers, submerging them.

Place the almonds in a bowl with enough water to cover them.

Let the almonds and elderflowers stand overnight.

Drain the almonds and discard the water they soaked in. Place the almonds in a blender.

Strain the elderflower-infused water and discard the flowers. Add the infused water to the blender.

Add the dates and a pinch of salt. Blend well, until no chunks of almonds or dates remain, about 2 to 3 minutes.

Strain the mixture through cheesecloth or a nut bag. Drink immediately, or store the drink covered in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.

Elderberry Dumplings

SERVES 4 TO 6

Elderberries ripen in the late summer and early fall. Like the flowers, they grow in clusters so heavy they weigh down the tree's branches. Look for the trees along riverbanks, roadsides, and damp woods.

FOR THE FILLING:

2 cups elderberries

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar

1 tablespoon all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon lemon juice

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup water

FOR THE DUMPLINGS:

3/4 cup all-purpose flour

1/2 teaspoon non-aluminum baking powder

1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom

1/2 teaspoon sea salt

1/4 cup sugar

2 teaspoons vanilla

1/4 cup whole milk

1 egg

FOR THE TOPPING:

Heavy cream

Vanilla ice cream

To make the filling:

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, add the elderberries, sugar, flour, lemon juice, and water. Cook until the mixture is hot. Turn off the heat and keep warm.

To make the dumplings:

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, cardamom, salt, and sugar.

In a small bowl, whisk together the vanilla, milk, and egg and add it to the flour mixture. Stir until just blended.

Pour the hot elderberry mixture into a casserole pan. Drop small spoonfuls of the dumpling batter over the surface of the elderberries.

Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, until the dumplings are lightly browned.

Serve warm with heavy cream or vanilla ice cream.

Fiddlehead Fern

Pickled Fiddlehead Ferns

MAKES ABOUT 1 QUART

These pickled fiddlehead ferns are a wonderful addition to the table, particularly in early spring when the palate longs for fresh flavors.

24 small stems of fiddlehead ferns

1 red bell pepper, thinly sliced

1 sweet onion, thinly sliced

2 teaspoons celery seed

1 tablespoon sea salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup white vinegar

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup sugar

Combine the fiddleheads, bell pepper, and onion in a glass bowl. Sprinkle with the celery seed and salt, cover, and set aside for 1 hour.

Bring the vinegar to a boil in a small saucepan and add the sugar. Allow the mixture to cool, then pour it over the fiddleheads.

Mix well and cover. Marinate the fiddlehead ferns in the refrigerator for 24 hours before serving.

Linguine with Sesame Miso Sauce and Fiddleheads

SERVES 4 TO 6

Fiddlehead ferns must be eaten before their fronds unfurl. Wash off the

scaly brown membrane under cool running water.

1 cup tahini

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup white or yellow miso

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup lemon juice

8 garlic cloves

2 teaspoons ground cumin

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper

$1\frac{1}{4}$ cups water

8 cups fiddlehead ferns, cleaned

1 (16-ounce) package linguine

1 tablespoon sesame oil

Place the tahini, miso, lemon juice, garlic, cumin, cayenne, and water into a blender and puree.

Pour the puree into a medium saucepan. Bring the sauce to a simmer, add the fiddleheads, and simmer for 7 to 10 minutes, until the fiddlehead ferns are tender.

Cook the linguine according to the package directions. Drain and toss with the sesame oil. Pour the fiddlehead sauce over the linguine and serve immediately.

Fiddlehead and New Potato Hash

SERVES 4

The fiddlehead fern is a good source of vitamin A, niacin, potassium, iron, and the trace minerals manganese, zinc, and copper.

$1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds new potatoes, diced

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound fiddlehead ferns, cleaned

4 ounces slab bacon, diced

1 tablespoon vegetable oil, if needed

1 small onion, diced

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Fill a medium pot with cold water and salt it heavily. Add the potatoes, bring to a boil, and cook until the potatoes are firm but tender, about 5 minutes.

Add the fiddleheads and cook until the ferns are bright green, about 2 minutes. Drain and set aside.

Place a skillet over medium-high heat, and when it is hot, add the bacon. Cook until the fat has rendered and the bacon is heated through.

Remove the bacon and set aside. You will need about 2 tablespoons of fat; pour off any extra, or add vegetable oil if necessary.

Cook the onion in the fat until tender and golden, about 5 minutes. Add the potatoes and fiddleheads and cook, stirring occasionally, until the potatoes are golden brown, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

Garlic Mustard

Infused Vinegar

MAKES 1 CUP

If you enjoy the flavor of horseradish, you will like this exciting condiment. It's easy to make and is a tasty accompaniment to wild game or fish.

1 garlic mustard root

1 cup white vinegar

Scrub and peel the garlic mustard root. Grate it finely and add it to the vinegar.

Gently heat the vinegar in a saucepan over low heat until it is steaming but not boiling. Remove the saucepan from heat and allow the vinegar to cool.

Pour the vinegar into a glass jar with a tight lid. Refrigerate for at least 3 days before using.

Green Ravioli

SERVES 4

Pungent, mildly bitter garlic mustard gives an interesting bite to this ravioli dish. Use premade wonton wrappers and you don't have to worry about rolling your own pasta dough.

1 medium onion, finely chopped

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

2 garlic cloves, chopped

1 (8-ounce) package baby crimini mushrooms, chopped

2½ cups garlic mustard leaves, roughly chopped

4 tablespoons farmer cheese

1 tablespoon sour cream

1 teaspoon sea salt

Freshly ground pepper

24 wonton wrappers

Extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling

Grated Parmesan cheese, for garnish

In a skillet over medium-high heat, sauté the onion in the olive oil until soft, about 5 minutes.

Add the garlic and mushrooms and cook until the mushrooms release their juices and the pan is dry, about 7 to 10 minutes.

Add 2 cups of the garlic mustard leaves, cover the pan, and cook until the leaves are wilted, about 2 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and allow the mixture to cool completely.

Place the mixture in a food processor and pulse to mix. Add the remaining ½ cup of garlic mustard leaves, farmer cheese, sour cream, and salt, and season with pepper. Pulse again until combined.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.

Lay out 12 wonton wrappers on a clean, dry surface. Spoon 1 teaspoon of filling into the middle of each wrapper. Moisten the edges of each wrapper with water. Top each wrapper with a second wrapper and press gently to seal.

Drop the ravioli into the boiling water, 3 or 4 at a time. Cook each batch for 3 minutes; then transfer the ravioli with a slotted spoon to a warm serving dish. Repeat until all the ravioli are cooked.

Serve drizzled with extra-virgin oil and garnished with Parmesan cheese.

Garlic Mustard Bruschetta

MAKES 10 TO 12 BRUSCHETTA

Garlic mustard is an invasive species, so eat up! It's bitter and tastes best mixed with other greens.

- 1 baguette or Italian bread loaf, cut into $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch diagonal slices
- 1 garlic clove, halved
- 4 garlic cloves, mashed to a paste with $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ pound garlic mustard leaves, shredded
- $\frac{1}{2}$ pound kale, stems removed, leaves shredded
- Sea salt and freshly ground pepper
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup smoked mozzarella cheese, shredded

Preheat the broiler. Place a rack 4 inches from the broiler.

Place the bread on a baking sheet and toast under the broiler for about a minute. Remove the bread from the oven and cool it on a rack.

Rub the toasted side with the cut garlic; then brush the toasts with 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Set aside.

In a large skillet, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil over medium heat. Add the garlic-salt paste and cook, stirring, until the garlic is fragrant, about 1 minute.

Add the mustard leaves and kale; season with salt and pepper to taste.

Turn the heat to medium high and cook until the greens are wilted and soft, about 3 minutes. Pour off any liquid and place the greens in a bowl.

Stir in the mozzarella until slightly melted. Divide the greens evenly between the bread slices and serve.

Jerusalem Artichoke

Pickled Jerusalem Artichokes

MAKES ¼ CUP

A little sweet and slightly spicy, these pickled Jerusalem artichokes are a fantastic way to use the roots you find while foraging.

¼ cup sea salt

4 cups water

1 pound Jerusalem artichokes, thinly sliced

1 small onion, sliced

1 garlic clove, chopped

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes

2 teaspoons mustard seeds

1 teaspoon celery seeds

2 cups apple cider vinegar

1½ cups sugar

12 whole cloves

1 cinnamon stick

Dissolve the salt in the water, and then add the artichokes, onions, and garlic. Refrigerate overnight.

In the morning, combine the remaining ingredients in a large saucepan, bring to a simmer, and cook for 5 minutes, stirring continuously. Allow the mixture to cool, and then remove cinnamon stick and cloves.

Drain the artichokes and cover them with the vinegar mixture.

Place the artichoke and vinegar mixture in a bowl, cover, and refrigerate for at least 6 hours before enjoying. Pickled Jerusalem artichokes will last 3 days in the refrigerator before they begin to lose their crunch.

Jerusalem Artichoke and Fingerling Potato Gratin

SERVES 4

Crunchy, sweet Jerusalem artichokes lighten a rich traditional potato gratin. This is delicious served with roasted chicken or pork.

Unsalted butter

1 cup chicken stock

1½ cups half-and-half

½ teaspoon sea salt, plus additional for seasoning

¼ teaspoon nutmeg, preferably freshly grated

3 pounds fingerling potatoes, peeled

¾ pounds Jerusalem artichokes, peeled

White pepper

3 teaspoons fresh or 1½ teaspoons dried thyme

Preheat the oven to 425°F.

Butter a shallow casserole dish.

In a small saucepan, add the chicken stock, 1 cup of half-and-half, ½ teaspoon salt, and the nutmeg. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Immediately turn off the heat and set the saucepan aside.

Slice the potatoes and Jerusalem artichokes ⅛ inch thick.

Layer one-third of the potatoes in the prepared dish. Season lightly with salt and white pepper, and sprinkle with 1 teaspoon thyme. Layer half the

Jerusalem artichoke slices on top of the potatoes, and pour 1 cup of the stock mixture over all. Repeat both layers.

Layer the remaining potatoes over the top, season with salt and white pepper, and sprinkle with the remaining thyme. Pour the remaining stock mixture over all.

Bake the casserole for 30 minutes.

Reduce the heat to 350°F and cook until the casserole is fork tender, another 25 to 35 minutes.

Remove the casserole from the oven and let rest 15 minutes before serving.

Jerusalem Artichoke Salad

SERVES 4

Jerusalem artichokes are incredibly versatile: They can be eaten baked, roasted, steamed, stir-fried, and, of course, raw, as in this salad. Their crisp texture, similar to that of water chestnuts, is showcased here.

1 pound Jerusalem artichokes, not peeled

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

1/4 cup Italian parsley, coarsely chopped

1/4 cup grated carrot

1/4 cup toasted walnuts, finely chopped

1 garlic clove, finely chopped

1/3 cup grated ricotta salata cheese

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

With a mandoline or a very sharp knife, slice the Jerusalem artichokes. Place the slices in a large bowl.

Pour the olive oil over the Jerusalem artichokes and toss to coat.

Add the lemon juice, parsley, carrot, walnuts, garlic, and ricotta salata. Toss to combine.

Season with salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

Garlic-Roasted Jerusalem Artichokes

SERVES 4

While Jerusalem artichokes may look like potatoes, they have a slightly sweet and nutty flavor that is concentrated by roasting. They are an excellent source of iron.

2 pounds Jerusalem artichokes, cubed

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

3 garlic cloves, chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon freshly ground pepper

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped chives

Preheat the oven to 400°F.

In a bowl, toss the artichokes with the olive oil, garlic, salt, and pepper. Place the Jerusalem artichokes on a rimmed baking sheet in a single layer.

Roast the Jerusalem artichokes for 30 to 40 minutes, until they are golden brown and tender but not collapsed.

Place the vegetables in a serving dish, sprinkle with the chopped chives, and serve immediately.

Juniper

Juniper Cocktail

SERVES 2

If you love gin, you'll enjoy this fresh-tasting cocktail.

1 tablespoon juniper berries, plus additional for garnish (optional)

2 ounces gin

1 ounce vermouth

Ice

4 dashes grenadine syrup

In a cocktail shaker, muddle the juniper berries with the gin, then add the vermouth.

Fill the remaining space in the shaker with ice and shake.

Strain the liquid into 2 glasses. Add 2 dashes of grenadine per glass, fill each glass with ice, and serve. Garnish with fresh juniper berries on cocktail picks, if using.

Marinated Mushrooms

MAKES 2 CUPS

Juniper berries are actually the tiny cones of the conifer tree. Their flavor works well with vinegary foods.

1½ cups dry white wine

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup white wine vinegar

2 garlic cloves, crushed

1 sprig rosemary or 1 teaspoon dried rosemary leaves

3 sprigs thyme or $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried thyme

2 teaspoons sea salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon juniper berries

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fennel seeds, crushed

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black peppercorns, crushed

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup plus 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 pound baby crimini mushrooms, halved

In a bowl, combine the wine, vinegar, garlic, rosemary, thyme, salt, juniper berries, fennel seed, red pepper flakes, and peppercorns.

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, add 3 tablespoons of olive oil and heat until very hot.

Add the mushrooms and cook, stirring once or twice, for 2 to 3 minutes; they should not be cooked all the way through. Spoon the mushrooms onto a plate and set aside.

Add the wine mixture to the skillet and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and simmer for 5 minutes.

Put the mushrooms in a heatproof container and pour the marinade over all. Let the mushrooms cool to room temperature, cover, and refrigerate for 6 to 8 hours.

Drain the mushrooms, discarding the marinade, garlic, and the aromatics. Pack the mushrooms into a glass pint container with a lid. Add the remaining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup oil to cover.

Refrigerate the mushrooms for at least 8 hours and up to 1 month.

Grilled Martini Salmon

SERVES 4

The piney flavor of juniper berries is the primary flavoring in gin. Here, the elements of a classic martini as well as juniper berries flavor the sauce.

FOR THE SAUCE:

1 tablespoon minced shallot
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup gin
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup dry vermouth
1 teaspoon juniper berries, crushed
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup heavy cream
2 teaspoons unsalted butter
6 pimento-stuffed olives, sliced
Fresh lemon juice
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

FOR THE FISH:

Extra-virgin olive oil
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds salmon fillets
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

To make the sauce:

In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, bring the shallots, gin, vermouth, and juniper berries to a boil. Lower the heat to medium and simmer until the mixture is reduced to about 3 tablespoons, about 5 to 10

minutes.

Add the cream and cook for 5 to 10 minutes, until the cream reduces to about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup.

Strain the sauce and return it to the pan; discard the shallots and juniper berries. Whisk the butter into the sauce. Add the olives and season with lemon juice, salt, and pepper. Keep warm.

To make the fish:

Preheat the grill to a medium heat, or preheat the broiler.

Lightly oil the grill or a broiler pan. Season the salmon with salt and pepper and brush both sides of the fish with oil.

Place the salmon on the grill or pan, flesh-side down to start, and grill or broil it for 2 to 5 minutes per side, depending on the thickness of the fillets. When done, place the fillets on a serving dish.

Spoon the sauce over the salmon and serve.

Juniper Berry Spice Rub

MAKES ABOUT $\frac{1}{3}$ CUP

The sweet, fruity notes of juniper berries add a bright note to heavier winter fare. This rub is a perfect complement for beef, pork, and game. This can be made in a spice grinder, but for best results, use a mortar and pestle.

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup sea salt

3 tablespoons juniper berries

2 tablespoons black peppercorns

1 teaspoon coriander seeds

1 teaspoon fennel seed

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon allspice

6 whole cloves

Place all the ingredients in a mortar and pestle or spice grinder and grind until you have a coarse powder. Store the rub in a tightly covered jar for up to 6 months.

Lamb's-Quarters

Muffuletta Spread

MAKES ABOUT 1 QUART

Wonderful as a dip and perfect on submarine sandwiches, this delicious lamb's-quarters muffuletta spread is quick and easy to make.

2 garlic cloves, chopped

1 small red onion, chopped fine

2 cups lamb's-quarters leaves

1 ripe avocado, pitted, peeled, and mashed

1 cup almonds, chopped fine

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup pitted green olives with pimentos, chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup pitted black olives, chopped

Combine all the ingredients and chill slightly.

This spread is best when eaten immediately, but it can be covered and refrigerated for up to 3 days.

Potage à la Lamb's-Quarters

SERVES 4

Lamb's-quarters are one of the best sources of beta-carotene, calcium, potassium, and iron, and a great source of B-complex vitamins, vitamin C, and fiber.

1 pound lamb's-quarters leaves

3 tablespoons unsalted butter

1 small onion, diced

3 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1½ teaspoons sea salt

Pinch of freshly ground pepper

3 cups vegetable stock

1 russet potato, boiled, peeled, and diced

Chopped chives, for garnish

In a saucepan over medium-high heat, cook the lamb's-quarters in 1 inch of water until limp and dark green. Drain the leaves and press out as much water as possible. Chop the leaves roughly. Set them aside.

In a saucepan over medium-high heat, melt the butter. Cook the onion until it is soft and golden, about 5 minutes. Add the flour, salt, and pepper, and cook until the onion is coated and the flour is absorbed, about 2 minutes.

Add the vegetable stock, stirring to dissolve the flour paste, and bring the mixture to a boil. Lower the heat to medium and cook, stirring, for 5 to 10 minutes, or until the mixture thickens.

Add the steamed lamb's-quarters and potato. Cook for another 5 minutes.

You can serve the soup as is, or puree it using a traditional or immersion blender for a more elegant presentation. Serve garnished with chopped chives.

Lamb's-Quarters Summer Salad with Feta

SERVES 4

For this salad, use leaves from young plants that are one foot tall, and pick leaves from the top of the plant.

FOR THE DRESSING:

1½ teaspoons fresh lemon juice

1½ teaspoons red wine vinegar

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 teaspoon sea salt

1 garlic clove

2 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano or 1½ teaspoons dried oregano

¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper

FOR THE SALAD:

2 cups young, tender lamb's-quarters leaves

2 small cucumbers, peeled, seeded, and cut into chunks

2 medium tomatoes, cored and cut in large chunks

2 whole scallions, sliced

4 ounces feta cheese, crumbled

⅓ cup Greek olives, pitted and roughly chopped

2 teaspoons fresh oregano or 1 teaspoon dried oregano

To make the dressing:

Place the lemon juice, vinegar, olive oil, salt, garlic, oregano, and pepper in a blender. Process until smooth. Set the dressing aside.

To make the salad:

In a large bowl, place the lamb's-quarters, cucumber, tomatoes, scallions, feta, olives, and oregano. Pour the dressing over the top and toss gently to

combine. Serve immediately.

Milkweed

Pickled Milkweed Buds

MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP

Just like capers, these pickled milkweed buds have a strong, salty flavor. Try them with pasta or on an elegant smoked salmon crostini.

FOR THE BRINE:

1 cup milkweed buds
1 cup water
2 tablespoons sea salt

FOR THE PICKLES:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup white wine vinegar
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon thyme
2 bay leaves (laurel)

To make the brine:

Place the milkweed buds in a heatproof bowl.

Boil the water and add the sea salt, stirring until the salt dissolves.

Pour the saltwater over the milkweed buds, covering the buds completely. Allow the water to cool before covering the bowl; refrigerate for 3 days.

To make the pickles:

Boil the vinegar, water, sugar, thyme, and bay leaves together.

Drain the brine from the milkweed buds. Place the buds in a glass jar and cover them with the hot vinegar solution. Allow the mixture to cool.

Transfer the milkweed buds to marinate in the refrigerator for 3 days before using.

Spicy Milkweed Bud Quiche

SERVES 6 TO 8

Milkweed buds look like broccoli florets, but when they're cooked, they taste more like green beans. To make sure you wash out all the bugs, submerge them in cold water several times before cooking.

`½ pound milkweed buds`

`4 eggs`

`4 tablespoons all-purpose flour`

`½ teaspoon non-aluminum baking powder`

`1 teaspoon sea salt`

`1 cup small-curd cottage cheese`

`2 cups shredded jalapeño jack cheese`

`4 tablespoons vegetable oil`

`Freshly ground pepper`

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Grease a deep dish 9-inch pie pan.

In a small saucepan, cook the milkweed buds in salted water for 5 to 7 minutes. Drain.

In a large bowl, beat the eggs until frothy. Add the flour, baking powder, salt, cottage cheese, jalapeño jack cheese, and vegetable oil, season with pepper, and stir until well combined. Stir in the milkweed buds.

Pour the mixture into the prepared pan and bake for 35 to 45 minutes, or until the quiche is set. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Buffalo Wing Milkweed Pods

SERVES 4 TO 6

Milkweed is so widespread, it's difficult to avoid. This perennial grows in old fields and by the roadside; it's most abundant in farm country. For this recipe, look for immature milkweed pods no more than two inches long. Be sure to rinse and clean them well.

1½ cups panko breadcrumbs

¼ cup all-purpose flour

2 teaspoons garlic powder

1 teaspoon paprika

½ teaspoon cayenne pepper

½ teaspoon sea salt

1 egg

1 cup milk

40 to 50 young milkweed pods

1 cup hot wing sauce of your choice

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a large bowl, mix the breadcrumbs, flour, garlic powder, paprika, cayenne, and salt.

In a separate bowl, whisk together the egg and milk until blended. Add the liquid ingredients to the breadcrumb mixture and combine well.

Dip the milkweed pods in the batter, draining off the excess, and place them on the prepared baking sheet in a single layer. Bake for 15 minutes, or until the milkweed pods are crisp.

Remove the pods from the oven and place them in a large bowl. Add the hot wing sauce and mix gently until the pods are coated. Put the pods back on the baking sheet and bake another 10 minutes. Serve immediately.

Nettle

Nettle-Peppermint Tea

MAKES 1 CUP

The benefits of nettle as a pain remedy, and for anemia, allergies, urinary tract infections, and other problems, have been known for centuries. One of the best ways to use nettle is to drink it as a tea. This refreshing recipe is good hot or over ice.

1 teaspoon crumbled dried nettle leaves

1 teaspoon crumbled dried mint leaves

8 ounces boiling water

Put the herbs in a cup or small bowl, and pour the boiling water over them. Steep for 5 minutes, then strain. Drink immediately as is, or add a sweetener, if you prefer.

Green Nettle Gazpacho

SERVES 4

Nettles are covered with tiny stinging hairs. Wear gloves when gathering and handling the raw leaves, and steam them briefly before using.

2 cups nettle leaves, steamed

1 avocado, pitted and peeled

1 small Granny Smith apple, peeled, seeded, and cored

1 cucumber, peeled and seeded

1 fennel stalk, trimmed and chopped

1 scallion, white and green parts, trimmed and chopped

Juice and zest of 1 lime

1 tablespoon fresh basil, chopped

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon sea salt

Pinch of cayenne pepper

2 to 3 cups vegetable stock

In a blender pitcher, place the steamed nettle, avocado, apple, cucumber, fennel, scallion, lime juice and zest, basil, salt, cayenne, and 1 cup of stock. Blend until creamy.

Add more stock until the desired consistency is reached.

Taste, and adjust the seasoning with more salt and cayenne, if necessary. Serve cold or at room temperature.

Creamy Nettle Tart

MAKES 1 PIE

Nettle leaves are rich in protein, calcium, phosphorus, iron, magnesium, beta-carotene, and vitamins A, B, C, D, and they also contain high levels of absorbable amino acids. Try this light tart as the centerpiece for a spring brunch.

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for greasing the pan

1 (10-inch) piecrust

1 garlic clove

5 cups nettle leaves

2 eggs, lightly beaten

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sour cream

1 teaspoon sea salt

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon black pepper

1 tablespoon finely chopped scallions, white and green parts

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh goat cheese, crumbled

Preheat the oven to 375°F.

Lightly grease a 10-inch tart pan with olive oil.

Roll out the piecrust and transfer it to the pan, pressing it into the pan. Don't worry if there's any overhang.

In a large skillet over medium heat, sauté the whole garlic clove in 1 tablespoon of olive oil until golden, about 3 to 5 minutes.

Add the nettle leaves and lower the heat. Cook, stirring, for 2 to 4 minutes, until the leaves are wilted. Remove the garlic clove and discard.

In a small bowl, whisk together the eggs and sour cream. Add the salt, pepper, and scallions and stir to combine.

Spread the nettles on the bottom of the tart shell. Pour the egg mixture over the nettles and top with the crumbled goat cheese. Fold the edges of the crust toward the center of the tart.

Bake the tart for 40 to 45 minutes, until the filling is set. Cool for 15 minutes before serving.

Nettle Dumplings with Sage Butter

SERVES 4

Think of these little dumplings as ravioli without the pasta wrapper. The crisp, buttery sage leaves are a lovely contrast to the tender pillows of nettles and ricotta.

1 pound nettle leaves

1 cup ricotta cheese, drained for 1 hour

3/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for garnish

1 cup all-purpose flour, plus additional as needed

1 teaspoon grated nutmeg

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt

1/4 teaspoon white pepper

2 egg yolks, lightly beaten

4 ounces unsalted butter

15 to 20 fresh sage leaves

Bring a small pot of water to a boil. Plunge the nettle leaves into the water and cook for 1 minute. Drain and squeeze out any excess water. Chop the leaves and reserve.

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a large bowl, combine the ricotta, Parmesan, flour, nutmeg, salt, pepper, and egg yolks.

Mix in the nettles. Add more flour, as needed, to make a soft dough; you may need more or less, depending on how wet your ingredients are.

To make the each dumpling, take a generous teaspoon of the mixture and roll it into an oval. Place the dumplings on the prepared baking sheet. Refrigerate for 1 hour or overnight.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and lower the heat to a simmer. Cook the dumplings in small batches. When they rise to the surface, gently scoop them out with a slotted spoon and place them in a serving dish.

Melt the butter in a small frying pan over medium-high heat. Add the sage leaves and cook until they are crisp.

Pour the sage butter over the dumplings. Sprinkle with more Parmesan cheese and serve immediately.

Nipplewort

Nipplewort Apple Juice

SERVES 2

If you enjoy fresh green juices, try using nipplewort in place of kale or spinach in juice recipes. This refreshing recipe makes two large glasses of fresh green juice and is perfect over ice on a hot day.

1 large handful nipplewort leaves

1-inch piece fresh ginger root

1 apple, quartered

Push the nipplewort leaves through a juicer, followed by the ginger root and apple sections. Skim off the foam and pour the juice over ice. Drink immediately.

Nipplewort Carrot Salad

SERVES 4 TO 6

Nipplewort is named for the closed buds, which resemble nipples. It thrives beside roadsides and along walls.

1 pound nipplewort leaves, thinly sliced

1 cup shredded carrot

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup golden raisins

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt, plus additional for seasoning

1 tablespoon lemon juice

3 tablespoons mayonnaise

2 tablespoons fresh chopped mint

Freshly ground pepper

In a large, nonreactive bowl, place the nipplewort leaves, carrots, and raisins. Sprinkle with ½ teaspoon of salt and toss.

In a small nonreactive bowl, place the lemon juice, mayonnaise, and fresh mint. Whisk to combine.

Pour the dressing over the salad mixture and toss to combine. Season with salt and pepper, and serve.

Nipplewort Paprikash

SERVES 4 TO 6

Nipplewort leaves taste a little like spinach. Use the young leaves when you want the most tender option; more mature leaves can be used in this stew.

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

2 onions, chopped

2 garlic cloves, crushed

1 pound red potatoes, skins on, cubed

½ teaspoon sea salt

8 cups vegetable stock

3 tablespoons tomato paste

2 teaspoons dried marjoram

1 tablespoon sweet paprika

1 tablespoon all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon unsalted butter, at room temperature

1 pound nipplewort leaves, finely chopped

2 cups full-fat sour cream

In a Dutch oven, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. Sauté the onion and garlic until the onion is soft, about 5 minutes.

Add the potatoes and salt, stir to combine, and cook for 2 to 3 minutes.

Add the vegetable stock and bring to a boil. Lower the heat to a simmer and cook for about 5 minutes.

Add the tomato paste, marjoram, and paprika, and simmer for 5 minutes.

Combine the flour and butter, and add the mixture to the pot. Cook until the flour mixture dissolves, about 2 minutes.

Add the nipplewort leaves, bring to a boil, and cook for 1 to 2 minutes.

Turn off the heat and stir in the sour cream until it is completely incorporated. Serve immediately.

Prickly Pear Cactus

Prickly Pear Pink Lemonade

SERVES 2

Look for fruits, or tunas, that are dark red or purple. The fruits are covered with tiny hairs; use gloves and tongs when harvesting. Burn off the hair, or glochids, by holding the fruit over an open flame with tongs.

2 prickly pear cactus fruit

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh lemon juice

2 tablespoons sugar

1 cup water

Cut the ends from the prickly pear fruit. Cut through the skin lengthwise and pull the peel off the fruit. Discard the peel.

Put the prickly pear fruit, lemon juice, sugar, and water in a blender. Blend on high until smooth. Serve over ice.

Prickly Pear Cactus Juice

MAKES 6 OUNCES

This delicious juice is wonderful on its own, and it is also an excellent mixer for cocktails starring favorites like rum and tequila.

1 pound prickly pear cactus fruit

3 tangerines, peeled

1 lime, peeled

Cut the ends from the prickly pear fruit. Cut through the skin lengthwise and pull the peel off the fruit. Discard the peel.

Cut the prickly pear fruit into quarters. Put all the fruit through a juicer.

Cover and chill the juice in the refrigerator for 1 to 2 hours before serving.

Nopalito Salad

SERVES 4 TO 6

Prickly pear pads are called nopales. Wearing gloves, hold the pad with tongs and cut or break the pad off the cactus. Scrape off the spines and burn off any glochids over an open flame before using the prickly pear pads in a recipe.

1 pound cactus pads

3 carrots, peeled and very thinly sliced

1 small white onion, diced

1 bunch cilantro, coarsely chopped

1 jalapeño pepper, seeded, ribs removed, and finely chopped

4 to 6 radishes, very thinly sliced

3 cups shredded cabbage

1 teaspoon sea salt

Juice of 2 limes

Using a vegetable peeler, peel the cactus pads as if peeling asparagus; lay the pads on a flat surface and lightly peel the tough green outer skin away.

Bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Chop the pads and boil them for 15 minutes. Drain and rinse the pads. Pat them dry.

In a large bowl, place the cactus pads, carrots, onion, cilantro, jalapeño,

radishes, and cabbage. Sprinkle the salt over the vegetables and toss to combine. Pour the lime juice over the vegetables and toss to combine.

Let the salad stand for at least 1 hour before serving.

Grilled Nopales Scramble

SERVES 1

Often eaten for breakfast in Mexico, this green scramble is delicious served simply with hot buttered tortillas on the side, or piled onto a hot buttered soft roll.

2 cactus pads, needles removed and lightly peeled

Vegetable oil

1 tablespoon butter

2 scallions, white and green parts, chopped

2 eggs, lightly beaten

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Heat a griddle or cast-iron pan over medium-high heat. Brush each side of the cactus pads with the oil. Cook about 4 minutes per side, until the pads are tender.

Cool the pads and chop them into bite-size pieces.

In a small frying pan over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the scallions and cook, stirring, for 1 to 2 minutes, until the scallions are wilted.

Add the pads and cook for 2 to 3 minutes.

Pour in the eggs and cook, stirring, until the eggs are cooked to your liking. Season with salt and pepper, and serve immediately.

Purslane

Purslane Martini

SERVES 2

A little spicy and perfectly delicious, this martini is an excellent and unusual way to enjoy fresh, succulent purslane.

1 handful purslane, plus additional for garnish

4 ounces gin

1 teaspoon olive juice

Ice

Crush the purslane in a cocktail shaker. Add the gin, olive juice, and then ice, and mix.

Pour the drink into 2 martini glasses and garnish with sprigs of fresh purslane.

Purslane and Avocado Salad

SERVES 6 TO 8

Succulent purslane, creamy avocado, and juicy mandarin orange slices combine to make a delicious salad. Young leaves and tender stem tips are best in this salad.

FOR THE DRESSING:

2 tablespoons fresh lime juice

1 scallion, white and green parts, finely chopped

2 tablespoons white wine vinegar

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

FOR THE SALAD:

1 avocado, pitted, peeled, and thinly sliced

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup canned mandarin orange slices, rinsed,
drained, and dried

3 cups purslane leaves, thick stems removed

2 tablespoons chopped parsley

2 tablespoons crumbled blue cheese

To make the dressing:

In a small bowl, whisk together the lime juice, scallion, and vinegar, and season with salt and pepper. Whisk in the olive oil.

To make the salad:

In a large bowl, toss together the avocado, mandarin orange slices, purslane, parsley, and dressing. Top with the crumbled blue cheese. Serve immediately.

Turkish Purslane Salad

SERVES 2 TO 4

This simple salad of red onion, tomato, and purslane can be put together in minutes. Accented by the tangy spice sumac, it is a wonderful complement to grilled meats.

Juice of 1 lemon

4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

½ teaspoon sea salt

1 small red onion, diced

4 cups purslane leaves and tender stems, large stems removed

1 large tomato, seeded and diced

Sumac, for garnish

In a small jar, combine the lemon juice, olive oil, and salt. Screw on the lid and shake well.

In a large bowl, place the red onion. Sprinkle it with 1 tablespoon of the dressing and let the onion sit for 5 to 10 minutes.

Add the purslane and tomato to the bowl. Add the remaining dressing and toss the salad so all the ingredients are coated. Garnish with sumac and serve.

Purslane and Golden Potatoes

SERVES 4

The mild flavor of purslane and buttery Yukon Gold potatoes are a nutritious and delicious combination. Try this as a side dish with roasted or broiled chicken.

1 pound small Yukon Gold potatoes

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary or 1 teaspoon dried rosemary

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

2 cups purslane leaves

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1 teaspoon lemon zest

If the potatoes are larger than a golf ball, cut them in half.

In a large, heavy-bottomed skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the potatoes and rosemary and season with salt and pepper to taste. Cook the potatoes without stirring for about 5 minutes, until the bottoms are golden.

Stir the potatoes, reduce the heat to medium low, and cover the pan. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the potatoes are tender, about 10 minutes.

Add the purslane and lemon juice to the potatoes and toss to combine.

Sprinkle the lemon zest over all.

Serve the potatoes warm or at room temperature.

Sheep Sorrel

Detoxification Juice

SERVES 1

Sheep sorrel is highly regarded for its detoxification properties. Enjoy it in this refreshing green juice, which is good at room temperature and wonderful over ice.

1 large handful sheep sorrel leaves

1 cucumber, peeled

2 cups honeydew melon, cubed

Process all the ingredients in a juicer, adding more melon if the flavor is bitter. Enjoy immediately.

Spring Sorrel Smoothie

SERVES 1

The tender green leaves of sorrel and spinach melt into the sweetness of the berries and banana in this breakfast smoothie.

2 or 3 ice cubes

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup young sheep sorrel leaves

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup young spinach leaves

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup frozen strawberries

$\frac{1}{2}$ banana, frozen

1 cup unsweetened almond or coconut milk

½ teaspoon agave

Place the ice in the bottom of a blender. Add the sorrel, spinach, strawberries, banana, milk, and agave. Blend until smooth.

Add more milk if necessary to achieve the desired consistency. Drink immediately.

Schav

SERVES 6 TO 8

Often served chilled, this tangy, creamy soup is also called green borscht. Originating in Eastern Europe, it was a spring tonic; wood sorrel was one of the first spring greens to appear after the long winter.

2 tablespoons butter

1 medium onion, diced

1 pound sheep sorrel leaves, thinly sliced

6 cups chicken or vegetable stock

1 teaspoon sea salt

½ teaspoon white pepper

Juice of 1 lemon

2 egg yolks, lightly beaten

Sour cream, for garnish

Chopped chives, for garnish

In a Dutch oven, melt the butter over medium-high heat. Add the onion and sorrel and cook, stirring, until the onions are soft and the sorrel is wilted, about 5 minutes.

Add the stock, salt, and pepper. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to medium, and simmer the ingredients for 20 to 30 minutes.

Turn off the heat and add the lemon juice a little at a time, until the soup is tart enough for your taste.

Add 2 tablespoons of the soup to the egg yolks and beat until combined. Add the egg yolks to the soup. Gently reheat the soup, stirring until the yolks are completely incorporated. Do not let the soup boil or you'll have scrambled egg soup.

The soup can be served warm or cold, garnished with a dollop of sour cream and sprinkled with chives.

Sorrel Sauce

MAKES ABOUT 2½ CUPS

This versatile sauce can be prepared in minutes, and dresses up grilled fish, pork chops, or chicken breasts. It's quick enough for a weeknight and elegant enough for a dinner party.

4 tablespoons butter

1 small shallot, finely chopped

8 ounces mushrooms, finely chopped

½ cup dry white wine

1 tablespoon lemon juice

6 ounces wood sorrel, thinly sliced

½ cup heavy cream

Sea salt and white pepper

In a skillet over medium-high heat, melt 2 tablespoons of butter. Sauté the shallot for 2 minutes, then add the mushrooms. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the mushrooms give up their liquid and are moist but not dry, about 10 minutes.

Add the white wine and lemon juice, and cook for 2 to 3 minutes.

Add the sorrel and cook, stirring occasionally, until the sorrel wilts and cooks down to a mash, 2 to 3 minutes.

Add the cream, and season with salt and pepper. Cook until the sauce bubbles around the edges, about 5 minutes. Serve immediately.

Shepherd's Purse

Shepherd's Purse Tea

SERVES 1

When enjoyed as a tea, shepherd's purse relaxes the body and calms the mind. Enjoy this recipe after a stressful day at work.

2 teaspoons fresh or dried shepherd's purse, chopped

16 ounces boiling water

Add the shepherd's purse to boiling water and allow it to steep for 15 minutes. Strain the tea into a large mug. Add honey or stevia, if desired, and enjoy.

Lemony Spring Salad

SERVES 3 TO 4

This refreshing salad is the perfect starter for a pasta dinner, or it can be paired with a grilled steak and rosemary potatoes.

FOR THE DRESSING:

Juice of 1 lemon

2 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 small shallot, finely chopped

1 teaspoon Italian seasoning

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil

FOR THE SALAD:

1/2 cup chopped fresh Italian parsley

2 cups shepherd's purse leaves, chopped into bite-size pieces

2 cups hearts of escarole, chopped into bite-size pieces

Shaved Parmesan cheese, for garnish

To make the dressing:

In a small jar, combine the lemon juice, garlic, shallot, Italian seasoning, salt, and pepper. Screw on the lid and shake well. Let sit for 15 minutes.

Add the olive oil and shake well to combine.

To make the salad:

In a large salad bowl, combine the parsley, shepherd's purse leaves, and escarole. Pour the dressing over the greens and toss to combine. If you have dressing left over, it will keep covered in the refrigerator for 3 days.

Garnish with the shaved Parmesan and serve.

Shepherd's Purse Sauce

MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS

Flavored butters like this one can be stored in the freezer, well wrapped, for months. Try a pat melted over broiled fish, or spread on sliced, toasted French or Italian bread.

1/2 cup unsalted butter, at room temperature

½ cup chopped shepherd's purse leaves

1 garlic clove, smashed

1 teaspoon capers, rinsed

2 anchovies

1 hardboiled egg plus 1 hardboiled egg yolk

4 teaspoons red wine vinegar

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Place the butter, shepherd's purse leaves, garlic, capers, anchovies, hardboiled egg, egg yolk, and vinegar in a blender or food processor. Season with salt and pepper.

Process until well blended.

Store, tightly covered, in the refrigerator for up to 1 week, or in the freezer for 3 months.

Sow Thistle

Green Machine Juice

SERVES 1

Sow thistles are highly nutritious, making them the ideal replacement for kale, spinach, and other common leafy greens in juices. Try this delicious recipe over ice.

2 Granny Smith apples, quartered

2 pears, quartered

1 handful sow thistle leaves

2 celery stems

1-inch piece fresh ginger root

Process all the ingredients in a juicer and enjoy immediately.

Creamy Sow Thistle with Walnuts

SERVES 4

In this dish, more mature sow thistle leaves are blanched to remove some of their bitterness before being braised. Creamy goat cheese softens the slightly bitter flavor of the sow thistle; toasted walnuts add a crunchy contrast.

1 cup salted water

1 pound sow thistle leaves, chopped

1 garlic clove, finely chopped

2 scallions, white and green parts, finely chopped

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup vegetable or chicken broth, plus more, if necessary

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

$\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground nutmeg

$\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup crumbled fresh goat cheese

2 tablespoons chopped walnuts, toasted

In a saucepan over medium-high heat, bring the salted water to a boil. Add the sow thistle leaves and cook for about 1 minute, and then drain.

In a skillet over medium-high heat, sauté the garlic and scallions in the olive oil until the scallions are wilted, 2 to 3 minutes.

Lower the heat, add the sow thistle leaves, and cook, stirring, until all the leaves are wilted, about 5 minutes.

Add the broth, cover, and simmer for 10 minutes.

Season with salt and pepper, and add the nutmeg. Stir in the goat cheese; let it soften. Garnish with toasted walnuts and serve.

Sow Thistle with Soy Sauce and Sesame Seeds

SERVES 2 TO 3

Try this Asian-inspired cooked salad as a side dish for fried fish or broiled salmon. This quick and easy recipe will keep, covered, in the refrigerator for three days.

1 pound sow thistle leaves, sliced $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch across

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup ground sesame seeds

2 tablespoons shoyu, or dark soy sauce

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Add the sow thistle and cook for about 1 minute. Drain the leaves well, but do not squeeze them dry. This may take about 5 minutes.

Place the sow thistle in a bowl and add the sesame seeds. Toss to combine. Add the shoyu a little at a time, tasting as you go. Serve immediately.

Young Sow Thistle and Radish Salad

SERVES 2

Make this salad in the early spring, and use only the youngest, most tender leaves. Lightly dressed with rice vinegar and toasted sesame oil, this salad is a refreshing side dish for a rich meal.

2 heads of young sow thistle (about $\frac{1}{2}$ pound), roots removed

4 to 6 red radishes, very thinly sliced

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon sea salt

1 garlic clove, mashed to a paste

2 teaspoons unseasoned rice vinegar

1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil

Tear or chop the sow thistle into bite-size pieces. Combine the sow thistle and sliced radishes in a large bowl.

In a small bowl, combine the salt, garlic, and rice vinegar. Let the dressing sit for 5 to 10 minutes so the flavors can blend. Add the sesame oil and whisk to combine.

Pour the dressing over the sow thistle and radishes. Toss to combine and let sit for 5 minutes before serving.

Watercress

Watercress Tea

SERVES 1

Watercress is highly regarded for its ability to ease coughs associated with the common cold, probably due to its high vitamin C content. This soothing tea will warm and comfort you, whether you have a cold or not.

2 tablespoons chopped watercress

16 ounces boiling water

Add the watercress to the boiling water and steep for 10 minutes. Strain into a large mug and sweeten if desired. Enjoy immediately.

Watercress Goat Cheese Sandwich

SERVES 1

This sandwich makes a quick, light lunch or a savory snack with a cup of hot tea. For extra crunch, add a few whole sprigs of watercress to the sandwich.

1 ounce fresh soft goat cheese

1 tablespoon chopped watercress leaves

1 tablespoon chopped toasted pecans

Sea salt

2 slices cinnamon-raisin sandwich bread

In a small bowl, mash together the goat cheese, chopped watercress, and toasted pecans with a fork. Season with salt.

Toast the bread.

Spread the mixture over one slice of the bread and top with the other. Slice on the diagonal and enjoy.

Watercress Zucchini Soup

SERVES 4

This pale green soup highlights the bright favor of watercress. The potato adds body without adding fat.

4 scallions, white and green parts, finely chopped

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

1 pound zucchini, chopped

1 small russet potato, peeled and cubed

4 cups chicken stock

1 large bunch watercress (about 8 ounces)

Sea salt and white pepper

4 tablespoons yogurt, for garnish

In a medium pot over medium heat, cook the scallions in olive oil until they are wilted and tender, about 3 minutes.

Add the zucchini and potato and cook for 3 to 5 minutes, until the zucchini begins to soften and the potato begins to take on some color.

Add 3 cups of chicken stock and bring to a simmer. Lower the heat and cook until the potatoes are tender, about 10 to 15 minutes.

Add the watercress and cook for 5 to 7 minutes.

Transfer the soup to a blender. Add ½ to 1 cup of the stock and blend until smooth. Pour the soup back into the pot, add any remaining stock, and reheat slowly. Season with salt and pepper.

Pour the soup into 4 bowls and garnish each serving with a dollop of yogurt.

Spring Greens and Peas

SERVES 4 TO 6

This side dish is the essence of springtime. Serve it alongside broiled lamb or pork chops and jasmine rice sprinkled with chopped scallions.

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound fresh baby spinach, tough stems removed

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup fresh or frozen peas

$\frac{1}{2}$ pound fresh watercress, thick stems trimmed

Sea salt

Put a steamer basket into a large pot. Pour in enough water to touch the bottom of the steamer, cover, and bring to a boil.

Remove the lid and place the spinach at the bottom of the steamer. Layer the peas evenly over the spinach. Place an even layer of watercress over the peas.

Cover the steamer. Start checking for doneness after 3 minutes; the more tender the greens, the faster they will cook. The dish should be done after about 5 minutes.

Place the greens and peas on a platter, season with salt, and serve immediately.

Wild Rose

Wild Rose Tea

SERVES 1

Wild roses can be a fantastic addition to teas. While simple rose hip tea is popular, a tea that combines several parts of the plant is more fragrant.

2 teaspoons crushed rose hips

2 teaspoons dried rose petals

2 teaspoons dried rose leaves

16 ounces boiling water

Add the rose hips, petals, and leaves to the boiling water. Allow the rose to steep for 10 minutes, then strain into a mug. Sweeten the tea if desired. Enjoy immediately.

Rose Hip–Infused Vodka

MAKES 1 LITER

You don't need an expensive brand to make this rosy, delicately flavored imbibement. Serve it in chilled martini glasses, garnished with organic rose petals.

1 cup rose hips, halved lengthwise and seeds removed

1 liter vodka

Place the rose hips in a large glass jar or bottle. Add the vodka, seal the jar, and store it in a cool, dark place for at least 4 weeks. Shake the jar every couple of days.

Strain the vodka into a clean bottle and seal. Store in a cool, dark place for another 4 weeks before using.

Thanksgiving Rose Hip Relish

MAKES ABOUT 2½ CUPS

If you have a bag of cranberries in the freezer, you can make this rosy, mildly spicy relish any time of the year. It's a natural on the Thanksgiving table or served with a pork roast.

1 (12-ounce) bag cranberries

½ cup light brown sugar, plus additional (optional)

1 cup fresh rose hips, seeds removed

Juice and zest of 1 orange

1 jalapeño pepper, seeded, ribs removed, and finely diced

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, cook the cranberries, brown sugar, rose hips, orange juice and zest, and the jalapeño until the cranberries soften and burst and the rose hips soften and cook through, 10 to 15 minutes.

Let the relish cool to room temperature. Store, covered, in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks.

Rose Hip–Rhubarb Compote

MAKES ABOUT 2½ CUPS

Fragrant rose hips add a new dimension to stewed rhubarb. Try this spooned over vanilla ice cream or on a piece of pound cake.

1 cup rose hips, seeds removed

1 cup water

1/4 cup honey, plus additional (optional)

2 cups sliced rhubarb

In a saucepan over medium-high heat, combine the rose hips, water, and honey. Bring to a boil, lower the heat to medium, and simmer for 10 minutes.

Add the rhubarb and just enough water to cover the fruit. Simmer for 10 to 15 minutes, until the rose hips start to break down and the rhubarb is tender but not falling apart. Taste and add more honey, if using.

Wild Violet

Violet-Infused Vinegar

MAKES 8 OUNCES

This wild violet vinegar tastes wonderful on salads and is delicious on fresh vegetables. It makes a lovely gift, too.

1/4 cup dried wild violets

8 ounces champagne vinegar

Carefully push the violets into a decorative glass bottle equipped with a cork or a tight-fitting lid. Try not to crush the flowers.

Slowly pour the vinegar into the bottle, making sure the flowers are submerged. Cap the bottle. Gently swirl the contents every few hours for 1 day.

Store the vinegar in the refrigerator and use within 1 month.

Wild Violet Loaf Cake

MAKES 8 TO 10 SLICES

This simply sweet loaf cake is ideal for a late-morning or afternoon snack. Or serve it at a child's tea party.

1 cup unsalted butter, plus additional for greasing
the pan

3/4 cup all-purpose flour, plus additional for
dusting

3/4 cup cake flour

1 teaspoon non-aluminum baking powder

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sea salt

5 eggs, yolks and whites separated

1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

$1\frac{1}{2}$ cups confectioners' sugar

1 cup wild violets

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

Grease and flour a 9-by-5-inch loaf pan.

In a large bowl, cream the butter until soft. Sift together the all-purpose flour, cake flour, baking powder, and salt. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the butter until well combined.

In another bowl, beat the egg yolks with the vanilla until the yolks are thick and lemon colored. Gradually add the sugar, beating until it is well combined. Pour the egg mixture into the butter mixture and stir to combine.

In another large bowl, beat the egg whites until they form stiff peaks; do not overbeat. Gently fold the beaten egg whites into the batter; do not stir.

Gently fold in the wild violets.

Pour the batter into the prepared loaf pan and level the top of the cake with a spatula. Bake for 1 hour, or until a toothpick inserted in the center of the loaf comes out clean.

Cool the loaf in the pan for 1 hour. Turn it out onto a plate, slice, and serve.

Triple Violet Salad

SERVES 3 TO 4

This salad is a triple violet threat, using the young leaves, flowers, and a dressing made with violet vinegar. It's the perfect starter for an Easter dinner.

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup mayonnaise

$1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons violet-infused vinegar ([here](#))

2 teaspoons fresh chopped chives

Sea salt and white pepper

2 cups tender young violet leaves, thinly sliced

1 large carrot, peeled and grated

1 cup mint leaves, thinly sliced

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup diced dried apricots

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped walnuts, toasted

1 cup lightly packed violet flowers

In a small bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, vinegar, and chives, and season with salt and pepper.

In a large bowl, gently toss the violet leaves, carrot, mint, apricots, walnuts, and violet flowers. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss again to coat the ingredients. Serve immediately.

Wood Sorrel

Wood Sorrel Tea

SERVES 2

This lemony infusion can be served hot or cold, sweetened or not, as you prefer. Cold, the tea tastes very much like lemonade.

1 cup wood sorrel leaves and flowers

2 cups boiling water

Honey

Place the wood sorrel leaves and flowers in a teapot or heatproof pitcher. Pour the boiling water over the wood sorrel.

Let the mixture steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

Strain into a teacup or mug and sweeten, if desired, for a hot beverage. For a refreshing cold beverage, strain the tea into a jar and refrigerate.

Wood Sorrel Marinade

MAKES 2½ CUPS

This tasty marinade is perfect for seasoning trout and other fish. Try it on roasted or grilled shrimp and vegetables, too.

2 cups chopped wood sorrel

2 garlic cloves, minced

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon sea salt

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon white pepper

1/4 cup fresh lemon juice

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Combine all the ingredients. Marinate food in the marinade for at least 2 hours before cooking.

Wood Sorrel Quinoa “Tabbouleh”

SERVES 6 TO 8

Here’s an interesting variation on the traditional tabbouleh, using protein-rich quinoa instead of bulgur wheat. Tangy chopped wood sorrel stands in for lemon juice.

1/2 cup chopped scallions, white and green parts

1 large tomato, seeded and diced

1 English cucumber, peeled, seeded, and diced

1/3 cup chopped Italian parsley

1/3 cup chopped fresh mint leaves

1/3 cup chopped wood sorrel leaves

3 cups cooked quinoa, at room temperature

1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

In a large bowl, stir together the scallions, tomato, cucumber, parsley, mint, and wood sorrel. Add the quinoa and toss to combine.

Pour the olive oil over the mixture and toss. Season with salt and pepper.

Let the tabbouleh stand 1 hour for the flavors to blend before serving.

Wood Sorrel Cream Sauce

SERVES 2

Serve this lovely sauce over salmon, chicken breasts, or steamed vegetables. Don't be put off by the color of the finished sauce; it's delicious.

2 tablespoons cold unsalted butter

1 small shallot, finely chopped

1/4 cup white wine vinegar

1 tablespoon heavy cream

Sea salt

Cayenne pepper

1/4 cup packed wood sorrel leaves, stems removed

In a heavy-bottomed, nonreactive saucepan, melt 1 tablespoon of butter. Add the chopped shallot and cook for 2 minutes, stirring, until it turns golden.

Add the vinegar and cook until the mixture reduces to about 1 tablespoon.

Add the cream and heat until bubbles begin to appear around the edges of the pan. Stir in the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter as the sauce thickens. Season with salt and cayenne.

Chop the wood sorrel leaves and add them to the sauce. Cook for 1 minute, until the leaves lose their bright green color. Use the sauce immediately.

Yarrow

Yarrow Tea

SERVES 1

Yarrow is a highly regarded natural cold remedy. This tea is an excellent decongestant.

1 tablespoon chopped yarrow leaves

16 ounces boiling water

Add the chopped yarrow leaves to boiling water and steep for 10 minutes. Strain into a mug and sweeten, if desired. Enjoy immediately, inhaling the steam as you drink.

Yarrow Tisane

SERVES 2

This spicier version of yarrow tea is especially comforting if you have a cold or fever.

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup packed fresh yarrow leaves

2 cups water

1 cinnamon stick

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper

6 whole cloves

1 green cardamom pod, crushed

Honey (optional)

In a small pot, add the yarrow, water, cinnamon, cayenne, cloves, and cardamom. Bring to a boil, lower the heat, and let the tea simmer, uncovered, for 10 to 15 minutes. Turn off the heat and let it sit for 20 minutes.

Strain the tea and reheat it. Pour the tea into a mug, sweeten with honey (if desired), and drink hot.

Yarrow Potato Omelet

SERVES 4

This version of a frittata can be served hot or at room temperature. Serve it with toast and strong coffee at breakfast, or with a simple green salad and crusty bread for lunch or dinner.

4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 small onion, finely chopped

2 medium Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and cubed

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup water

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

6 eggs

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped young yarrow leaves

In a large nonstick skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil over medium-high heat. Sauté the onion until soft, about 5 minutes.

Add the potatoes and water, and season with salt and pepper. Cover and cook until the potatoes are tender, about 10 minutes. Spoon the potatoes into a bowl and let cool, about 30 minutes. Wipe out the skillet and return it to the stove.

Preheat the broiler.

In a bowl, beat the eggs with the chopped yarrow leaves. Season with salt and pepper. Add the cooked potatoes and stir to combine.

In the same skillet, add the rest of the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil and heat over medium-high heat. Pour in the egg mixture, making sure it is evenly distributed. Cook until the sides and bottom are set, 5 to 7 minutes.

Run a knife around the edges of the skillet to loosen the omelet. Cover, reduce the heat, and cook until the center is almost set, 5 to 7 minutes.

Uncover and place the pan under the broiler until the top is brown, about 3 minutes. Let the omelet rest for 3 to 5 minutes. Serve the omelet from the pan or turn it out onto a serving platter.

Yellow Rocket

Yellow Rocket Pesto

SERVES 3 TO 4

Yellow rocket adds just the right amount of zip to this fresh take on a classic basil pesto. Use it on your favorite pasta; it's perfect hot or cold.

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup yellow rocket, chopped

2 cups fresh basil, chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup Parmesan cheese

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup pine nuts

3 garlic cloves, chopped

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Combine the yellow rocket, basil, Parmesan, pine nuts, and garlic in a food processor and pulse until smooth.

With the food processor running, add the olive oil in a thin, constant stream. Season with salt and pepper.

Use immediately, and refrigerate any unused sauce in a sealed container for up to 3 days.

Wild Winter Salad

SERVES 4 TO 6

This sturdy salad is made from foraged greens that can be found after the

first frost. The bitter leaves are tempered by the hot dressing. Make sure the greens are well washed and free of dirt and grit.

1 large bunch yellow rocket
1 large bunch chickweed, leaves only
1 bunch dandelion greens
4 tablespoons clarified butter
 $\frac{1}{2}$ small red onion, very finely chopped
10 leaves sheep sorrel, finely chopped
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
2 tablespoons cider vinegar
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Place the rocket, chickweed, and dandelion leaves in a large serving bowl.

In a small saucepan, heat the butter over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook until it is soft and translucent, about 5 minutes.

Add the sheep sorrel and cook until it is wilted, about 5 minutes.

Add the mustard and cider vinegar and heat through. Season with salt and pepper.

Pour the dressing over the greens and toss to coat. Serve immediately.

Spaghetti with Garlic-Braised Yellow Rocket

SERVES 4 TO 6

Good ingredients are the key to this simple dish. Use imported pasta, fresh garlic, good olive oil, and the best Parmesan cheese you can find. You can use more or less garlic than listed here, but don't leave it out.

1 (1-pound) package spaghetti

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

2 garlic cloves, chopped

$\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon red pepper flakes

8 ounces yellow rocket, finely sliced

1 whole lemon

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, plus
additional for serving

Cook the pasta al dente, according to the directions on the package.

While the pasta is cooking, heat 1 tablespoon of olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and red pepper flakes and cook until the garlic starts to turn pale gold, about 2 minutes.

Add the rocket and cook, stirring, until the greens have wilted, 3 to 5 minutes.

Grate the zest of the lemon over the greens.

When the pasta is ready, drain it, reserving $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the cooking water. Add the pasta and reserved water to the greens in the pan. With tongs, toss the pasta and greens to combine.

Slice the lemon in half and squeeze the juice over the pasta.

Remove the pan from the heat, drizzle the remaining 1 tablespoon of olive oil over the pasta, and top with the grated Parmesan. Serve immediately. Garnish with extra Parmesan, if desired.

Grilled Gruyère and Yellow Rocket Sandwiches

SERVES 1

Who says eating your greens means eating salad? Here the rich cheese is balanced by spicy yellow rocket and briny kalamata olives.

15 kalamata olives, pitted and finely chopped

1 tablespoon mayonnaise

2 slices sourdough bread

2 ounces sliced Gruyère cheese

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup roughly chopped yellow rocket

Unsalted butter, at room temperature

In a small bowl, stir the chopped olives into the mayonnaise.

Spread the mayonnaise on both slices of bread.

Place the cheese on one slice of the bread and top with the rocket.

Cover the rocket with the other slice.

Spread the outsides of both sides of the sandwich with the soft butter.

Heat a griddle or frying pan over medium-high heat. Cook the sandwich on one side until it is golden. Flip and cook the other side until it is golden and the cheese is melted and gooey.

Remove the sandwich from the pan and enjoy.

Conclusion

Edible wild plants are all around you. By learning as much as you can about the plant life in your area, you will discover that nature's bounty is nearly endless. Once you begin to forage, you may find the activity is almost addictive; after all, what could be better than harvesting your own food for free while enjoying the outdoors?

The more you forage for wild plants, and the more species you learn about, the greater your understanding of these plants will be, and the more you will enjoy using them in recipes, including the ones in this book. Don't be surprised if, after a time, you find yourself substituting domesticated vegetables with these wild foods, as the ways you can use these plants are nearly limitless.

By gradually expanding your knowledge of wild edible plants, collecting them as often as possible, and enjoying them regularly, you will enjoy greater involvement with the process of feeding yourself, your family, and your friends. And you will certainly save money while taking advantage of some of the most nutritious wild foods nature has to offer.

Glossary

basal leaf: a leaf that grows from the lowest part of the stem of a plant

contact dermatitis: an itchy skin reaction caused by direct contact with irritants or allergens

corn: a tuberous root that serves as a storehouse for plant nutrition

ingestion poisoning: poisoning that occurs when an individual eats a toxic plant or other toxic matter

inulin: a type of dietary fiber often found in plants' roots; when consumed in excess, inulin can lead to painful gas and bloating

poultice: a soft, moist mass, typically made of plant matter, that is applied to the body to relieve soreness and inflammation

rhizome: a horizontal root structure that spreads rapidly, connecting plants to one another in masses

rose hips: the fruit of the rose plant; the bulbous part left behind after the flower sheds its petals; rose hips begin to form after the flowers are pollinated in spring or early summer, and ripen in late summer through autumn

seed head: the dried flower or fruit that contains the ripe seeds of a plant

sepal: small green leaflike supportive structure found beneath a flower's petal

taproot: a long, tapering root that grows straight down from a plant's center

two-thirds rule: taking a maximum of only one-third of a species from a

particular spot and leaving two-thirds of the food behind, or harvesting only one-third of each plant's resources

whorl: a set of leaves, flowers, or branches that all spring from the stem at the same level and encircle it

APPENDIX A

Ten Steps to Making Tinctures

Tinctures made with alcohol and wild plants are excellent dietary supplements, because alcohol is capable of drawing vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants from the plants and preserving them so they may be readily absorbed by the body.

When deciding which plants to use, choose those with high nutrient levels. For example, rose hips are high in vitamin C, chickweed has high iron content, and dandelion leaves are high in vitamin A.

1. Gather Materials

Tinctures keep best when stored in airtight containers made of dark glass. Since you take only a few drops of the tincture at a time, it is best to purchase specially made glass tincture bottles with droppers. These come in various sizes and are available online and at specialty stores.

To make the tincture, get a glass jar with a tight-fitting lid. A simple quart-size canning jar is an excellent choice.

Do not make or store tinctures in plastic containers, because the plastic can leach toxic chemicals into the tincture. Also, do not store tinctures in metal containers, since metal can cause undesirable chemical changes in the tincture.

You will also need small funnels for bottling the tinctures you make. Avoid plastic ones if possible; glass or stainless steel is preferable, because these materials don't contain harmful chemicals.

2. Gather Ingredients

First, you will need a high-quality alcohol base. An 80-proof vodka works well for making tinctures, as does a 190-proof grain alcohol, such as Everclear. If you decide to use a different spirit, be sure it is 80-proof or higher. This will ensure the plant matter is properly assimilated and does not become moldy.

Then, decide which plant or combination of plants you plan to use.

Carefully wash them and then make sure they dry completely.

3. Chop the Plants

Mince the plants you have chosen into tiny bits—the smaller, the better. If you have a food processor, feel free to use it to make this task easier.

If you are using dried plants rather than fresh ones, you can simply crumble them until they are as powdery as possible. Use a mortar and pestle for this, if you have one.

4. Place the Plants In the Mixing Jar

Place the chopped or powdered plant material into the mixing jar. If you're using fresh plants, add just a little less by volume than the amount of alcohol you plan to use. For example, if you have sixteen ounces of alcohol, add fourteen to fifteen ounces by volume of chopped plants. If you're using dried plants, add one ounce by weight for every five ounces of alcohol.

5. Cover the Plants with Alcohol

Slowly pour the alcohol into the jar that contains the plant material. Do not reverse steps four and five.

6. Break the Bubbles

Using a glass mixing rod or a butter knife, gently stir around the edges of the mixture to ensure that all air bubbles are broken and none remain. This will prevent spoilage.

7. Label and Age the Tincture

Label the tincture with the contents and date it was started. Place the mixing jar in a cool, dark place for eight days to one month.

8. Blend Regularly While Aging

Shake the mixing container twice daily during the aging process. If aging the tincture for longer than fourteen days, shake it just once daily after the first two weeks.

9. Strain the Tincture

At the end of the aging period, strain the tincture into a clean glass bowl. Line a sieve with several layers of cheesecloth, a section of muslin, or even an unbleached coffee filter to ensure that no plant matter makes its way into the finished tincture. Work slowly and carefully, pressing the plants with a wooden spoon to encourage them to release all the liquid they contain. If plant matter ends up in the bowl, strain it a second time.

10. Decant and Store the Tincture

Using a small funnel, carefully pour the tincture into the storage bottles you have purchased. Cap each one tightly and apply a label with the blend's name and date. Store it in a cool, dark place for up to five years.

APPENDIX B

The Ten Most Common Poisonous Plants

Here are North America's ten most common toxic plants. Though many of these plants are wonderfully fragrant, vibrantly beautiful, and intriguing to look at, they are also poisonous. As a reminder, make sure you positively identify all plants before consuming them.

1. Anthurium Also known as pigtail plants or flamingo flowers, anthurium have white or red spade-shaped flowers and dark green leaves. If consumed, they cause mouth pain that leads to blisters and swelling in the mouth and throat.

2. Chrysanthemum These popular autumn-blooming plants have toxic flowers that can cause itchiness and swelling. Though they smell divine, they should never be consumed.

3. Ficus There are nearly eight hundred ficus species, all of which have vibrant green leaves and milky sap. They cause itching and swelling, and should not be consumed.

4. Foxglove Foxglove is a lovely plant with central spikes that bear dangling rows of pink, white, blue, or purple flowers with contrasting dots inside. Although foxglove leaves are used to manufacture the heart medication digitalis, this plant is not safe to consume. It causes nausea, vomiting, cramps, diarrhea, and mouth pain. In most cases, it also causes heart arrhythmias.

5. Hydrangea A favorite with gardeners and florists, hydrangea has massive puffs of individual blossoms in colors that include white, pale yellowish-green, pink, blue, purple, or a combination of these colors. Consuming hydrangea leads to severe itchiness and sweating, nausea and vomiting, and a sense of overall weakness. In some cases, people who have eaten hydrangea have suffered convulsions, circulation problems, and

even coma.

6. Lily of the Valley With its tiny white, bell-shaped flowers and lush green leaves, lily of the valley is a very beautiful plant. Unfortunately, eating it leads to nausea and vomiting, severe abdominal pain and cramping, diarrhea, and mouth pain. It can also cause a slow or irregular heart rate.

7. Narcissus Also known as jonquils or daffodils, narcissus blooms early in spring, emerging from bulbs that are easily mistaken for onions. When eaten, narcissus bulbs cause nausea and vomiting, cramps, and diarrhea.

8. Oleander This popular shrub, with its white or pink flowers and vibrant green leaves, is deadly. Consuming it can cause heart arrhythmias that, if not treated, can lead to death.

9. Rhododendron Rhododendrons are often cultivated but can also be found in the wild. These shrubs have pointed green leaves and bell-shaped flowers. Consumption leads to a burning mouth, increased salivation, vomiting, diarrhea, and skin tingling, followed by weakness, headache, and dim vision. Heart arrhythmias may follow, leading to a coma or fatal convulsions.

10. Wisteria Wisteria is a popular ornamental plant that is common throughout the South and Southwest. Also known as the kidney bean tree, it has stout woody vines that support lush green leaves and beautiful cascades of white, pink, blue, or lavender flowers. If consumed, this plant can cause cramps, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Resources

ONLINE RESOURCES

The Internet is an excellent place to learn more about edible wild plants. Remember to look for information from reputable sources, such as universities, colleges, and agriculture experts. Always validate any information you find online with at least one other source.

North American Native Plant Society (NANPS)

One excellent online resource is the NANPS. The website includes a plant database, advice on gardening with native plants, conservation resources, and links to local native plant societies.

www.nanps.org

Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences

The section on weed identification of the Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences website has photos, descriptions, biology, and foraging details for many common edible wild plants.

extension.psu.edu/pests/weeds/weed-id

PRINT RESOURCES

There are dozens of excellent books on foraging for wild plants. Of all the ones listed here, the most important to get is one of the illustrated field guides for edible plants that grow in your area. Look for a guide with high-quality photographs and illustrations.

Boutenko, Sergei. *Wild Edibles: A Practical Guide to Foraging, with Easy Identification of 60 Edible Plants and 67 Recipes*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 2013.

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Kallas, John. *Edible Wild Plants: Wild Foods from Dirt to Plate (The Wild Food Adventure Series, Book 1)*. Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2010.

Lincoff, Gary. *The Joy of Foraging: Gary Lincoff's Illustrated Guide to Finding, Harvesting, and Enjoying a World of Wild Food*. Beverly, MA: Quarry Books, 2012.

Lovesick Lake Native Women's Association and Fox Chapel Publishing Company. *Native Indian Cookbook: Wild Game, Fish, and Wild Edibles*. Edited by David Hunt. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1997.

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Tull, Delena. *Edible and Useful Plants of the Southwest: Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona*, rev. ed. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2013.

Wigginton, Eliot. *Foxfire 2: Ghost Stories, Spring Wild Plant Foods, Spinning and Weaving, Midwifing, Burial Customs, Corn Shuckin's, Wagon Making, and More Affairs of Plain Living*. New York: Anchor Books, 1973.

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