FORAGING FOR EDIBLE WILD PLANTS

THE NATURAL FOOD LOVER'S GUIDE TO IDENTIFY AND COOK THE ABUNDANT FREE FOOD AROUND YOU RIGHT NOW

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Foraging For Edible Wild Plants: The Natural Food Lover's Guide to Identify and Cook the Abundant Free Food Around You Right Now

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Acknowledgments

To Lil Bitty Gramma and my dad, who shared their love of food with me.

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PART I

THE INTERESTING AND EXCITING OPTION OF FORAGING

CHAPTER 1

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF FORAGING!

There is something wild in you.

We, humans, are animals, after all. And for about 90% of our history, we have ventured out into grasslands, forests, seashores, and oases, into uncultivated lands to find food. Your recent ancestors certainly did. Maybe you even joined them a time or two. It is impossible not to feel the residue of this essential and ancient activity within you. The urge to gather wild food is deep in your bones.

Or maybe you're a food lover. You delight in the pleasure of the palate and the creativity of the kitchen. People have been cooking food for 1.5 million years. Yes, fire allowed us to get more calories into our systems. But it also made it possible to try new foods that would have been unpalatable or inedible otherwise. Trying and cooking different foods is in your DNA. It only makes sense that you'd feel a pull in this direction.

Perhaps it's both. Both compulsions pull you into the wild, to the coast, to riverbanks, and meadows. Part of you knows there's abundance out there. But there’s another part of you that can't quite see it just yet; doesn't know where to look and doesn't want to waste too much time trying.

In the 21st century, we mainly harvest food from shelves. We can even have it show up at our door at almost any hour. Today, eating is easy. But something essential is missing in how most of us eat every day. Yes, it can be tasty. Yes, it can be nutritious. But I think you need more.

Unlike going to the grocery store, the farmers' market, or even my kitchen garden in the yard, when I'm foraging, I know that I'm participating in an ancient cycle of life that has kept people nourished for over one million years.

So, there's a rush when I pull a wild plant from the ground with my bare hands. I get excited about what I'm going to make with it, the flavors I'll develop with it, and the good time I'll have with the people that share it with me. But there's more.

Even though pulling plants from the hard ground can be strenuous at times, there's tranquility in this act. Even if I'm sweating, I feel peaceful because I know I can return to this spot and find more when needed. And I feel a sense of abundance.

There's a bonanza of food in your backyard right now. All you have to do is find, pick, and enjoy it.

Most people don't realize how much free food is out there, just waiting to be harvested. Thousands upon thousands of wild plants grow all around you, in every season, in every part of the country. Finding and using these edible wild plants offers tons of benefits. Here are just a few:

- Many of them provide as many nutrients, if not more, than the typical foods you find in grocery stores!
- They're free!
- It’s a super-sustainable and environmentally friendly way to eat.
- It's a great way to experience new flavors and textures.
- It's a great way to spend time with people you love.
- You'll feel a sense of accomplishment by participating in this cycle of life.
- You can get creative with these new ingredients.
- Many wild edible plants have medicinal uses.
- You'll always be able to get food, any time, any place, under any circumstances.
- You can add a bit of wildness back into your life.
- You can always find a bit of peace out in the wild.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK

Finding edible plants can be challenging if you're starting out. And, you probably have lots of questions. How do you find wild edible plants? What's the best way to identify the ones that you'll like? How do you know if something's poisonous? We'll help you with all that and more in this book. You'll learn everything you need to know about foraging for wild edibles.

You'll learn how to forage for various crops so that no matter where you are or what time of year it is, you'll be able to find something tasty. We'll tackle the common and not-so-common wild plants people love to forage, including wild mushrooms. You'll learn which parts are best to eat, including the stems, roots, seeds, flowers, and the like. You'll love this book if you've ever been curious about what is truly out there.

We'll also review how to use these foraged foods, including discussing their various flavors, recipe ideas for preparing them, and other uses beyond the kitchen. That's right. The medicinal uses I alluded to earlier include treating ailments, easing pain, controlling inflammation, and more.

We'll also dive into the best ways to preserve these wild edibles so they're fresh in between uses and meals. That way, you can keep and use these edibles for a long time.

Most people shy away from foraging because they don't want to eat something toxic or poisonous and get sick. I've been there. I've picked my fair share of plants I shouldn't have. I don't want that to happen to you. That's why this book gives you a process to identify safe plants, so you can be sure they're good to eat before you harvest them. There are easy ways to determine if a plant is harmful or not.

Identifying edibles, even at a beginner level, is an invaluable skill. You'll be able to find dozens of useful plants that are edible while avoiding any chance of consuming plants that are not good for you. That way, you'll be able to make meals with nutritional value, all through wild plants. With this book, you'll have a solid foundation to start your foraging adventure and make sure it's safe and fun. Pretty cool, huh?

In my opinion, foraging should be fun first. It's a great activity to do with kids, family, or friends. Or it can be a fun way to enjoy some alone time. Either way, you'll get to explore and connect with the wild lands around you. We'll give you some cool ideas to make foraging a fun hobby rather than just an errand, like going to the grocery store can be at times. We'll also talk about the tools you'll need when out and about.

WHO IS GREER?

Hi, I'm Greer. My father used to take me foraging as a kid in Michigan. He had a pocket-sized field guide with a plastic cover that wouldn’t get damaged in the wetness. We’d take that book and trek through the forest at the park and talk about the different plants and nibble fluffy Queen Anne’s Lace blossoms. Sometimes, we’d also harvest dandelions and other “weeds” from our yard.

I remember the first time I ate wild dandelion greens, with bacon, of course. I’d never tasted anything like it. Most kids don’t like the “green” flavor of vegetables. But wild foods have such unique flavors that it can be a fun experience for kids to try them. I think that’s what got me hooked on wild edibles.

But everything changed when I tried to get into wild edibles as an adult. I felt like I was starting over. And in many ways, I was. I was living on the other side of the country, in a different climate, and adulting for the first time. I had to ask a lot of questions, buy books, and just get out there and try things. That's how I learned. There's wisdom in community. People will help you if you ask, especially in the community of foragers. But then, you gotta get out there and try things yourself.

I've foraged myself and studied some of the best methods to find wild plants. And I put what I learned into this book. But this read will not be like taking on a super-scientific textbook. It's not an

encyclopedia. It’s not a field guide. This book is a mix of fun and informational, inspiring and functional. My goal is to free you from confusion when choosing edible wild plants. I want you to be able to walk out your door on any day, at any time of the year, and see abundance because it's there, just waiting for you.

I wrote this book because I'm confident in the strategies inside. This book offers you all the practical experience I've gathered so you can avoid the issues I've faced in the past when gathering wild edibles. I want you to avoid my mistakes so you can gather wild edibles easily, all while having a good time. After you finish reading the tips here, I know you’ll be able to identify yummy wild edibles you'll enjoy cooking and eating.

So, what are you waiting for? Are you ready to improve your diet, reduce food costs, and learn a fun hobby? Then, keep reading. I hope you enjoy this book and have fun learning how to forage plants the way I have.

CHAPTER 2

THE BASICS ABOUT WILD FOOD

Wild means untamed. Wild means natural. Wild means untouched by humans.

So, what are wild foods? Wild foods are all the varieties of tasty and nutritious edible plants in nature, in uncultivated areas, waterways, along shores, and in forests and prairies.

Before people knew how to farm, wild food was all humans ate.

Our ancestors searched for plants to create sufficient nutrition to survive. Wild food was nutritious enough to live on back then. The same is true today. It's been there all along. Over time, we just forgot how tasty, nutritious, and enjoyable all these plants are.

But also, there's a continuum to wildness. Wild food can include, for example, a commercially harvested seed that a bird accidentally dropped in your yard. It was not cultivated by humans and could only rely on its natural powers to sprout and grow.

A few years ago, a bird dropped a peach seed at a friend's house in the compost pile. They just let it grow back there. And boy, did it grow, with all that fertilizer around it. The forces that brought it there were wild. And the more time it spends there, the more it's a product of those wild forces. This new little peach tree is wild food, too, in my opinion.

What about an apple tree that was planted by humans ten years ago? And since then, no one has tended, watered, or picked fruit from it. Only the birds, the sun, and the rain have paid attention to it. It's surrounded by dozens of offspring, saplings that sprouted from the apples that fell on the ground around it. This tree didn't start off wild, but it's headed in that direction. So are all the other trees around it.

In my neighborhood, growing up, there were wild mulberry, and other bushes just left to grow across fences, only watered by the rain. They made for fun eating adventures, even though we were just in the alley behind the house. We didn't know it at that age, but we were foraging in our own neighborhood.

There's wild food everywhere you look. Even though humans have close to three billion acres under food cultivation, mother nature is at work on a bigger project. Animals, wind, and water move seeds across all 36 billion acres of the planet all the time. That's why you can find wild foods everywhere and anywhere. All you have to do is look around.

While this book will primarily focus on the wild plants you may not know about yet, don't forget about the other kinds of wild things you can find all around you too. Collecting this abundant food shouldn't be seen as "gross," "crude," or "dangerous." I think it's a fun hobby, a great way to try new foods, and a fantastic way to feed your body and spirit.

FORAGING RULES

Here are a few rules you should keep in mind while you're out food hunting. They will keep you safe. But they also protect the natural environments you'll be visiting.

Don't Eat It Until You Know It's Safe!

THIS IS RULE NUMBER one. Don't even go out to start foraging until you have fully incorporated this rule into your idea of foraging. No nibbling unknown plants while you're out there. Why? Because if you eat something poisonous, you can get sick and even die. Got it!

Now that I've scared you enough to remember this rule, here's the good news. You can learn to recognize safe plants and avoid poisonous ones. The important part is to identify several characteristics of the plant so you can be sure it's the one you think it is. We'll go over how to do that in chapter ten. So, for now, don't worry too much.

Starting to forage is like the first time you rode a bike or drove a car. You were a little shaky at first. But there was someone there to help you. And now, you do it without even thinking too much about it. People forage every day and make tasty dishes from what they harvest. You'll get there too. Plus, you have this book to guide you along the way. This book will give you all the identifying characteristics you'll need to decide if a plant is safe to eat.

Only Take What You Need Right Now

YOU CAN ALWAYS COME to pick more later. Don't over-pick now and risk permanent harm to your prime foraging spot. As a forager, you're responsible for ensuring that plant communities grow back healthy.

I like to think of nature as a large storage container. Nothing is fresher than right after it's picked. Your refrigerator can't match this level of freshness. Your freezer can't. Your root cellar can't.

Picking fresh is the best way to get the most nutrients, flavor, and fresh textures from the food you forage. So, in most cases, it's best only to pick what you can eat in the next few days, maybe a week.

Some wild goodies have small harvest windows when they are at their peak. For example, wild asparagus would be a weakness for me. You want to pick it as young and tender as possible before it develops woody stems or goes to seed. But rather than picking more than I can eat, I gather just enough to enjoy right now.

I like the idea of the special occasion every year, the day when I pick the first asparagus of the season. It's a small celebration for me. That's much more exciting than dreading eating asparagus again on day five because I picked too much.

It's also a different story when you're harvesting to preserve food. Then, you'll take more than a week's worth. My suggestion is to harvest just enough to last you for the year. And by that, I mean what you'll actually eat within that year. Just like fresh food, you want your preserved foods to burst with as much flavor as possible when you

decide to eat them. By year two, that jar on the shelf is starting to lose some of its shebang. So, don't go overboard even when you're foraging to preserve.

Tread Lightly

EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE probably looking for a few specific plants when wild food hunting, all the plants you see in your prime foraging spots work together to make for a healthy environment. Pulling weeds or bothering plants that you're not interested in will hurt the balance supporting the plants you want.

Unless they're invasives, don't damage the stems, branches, roots, or other parts of the plants nearby. This can stunt their growth or cause diseases that would affect their health. Be careful out there. And be careful going in or out of your foraging areas too. You don't want to damage plants in someone else's particular foraging spot.

Also, try not to pull entire plants when you only need a few stalks or leaves. This kills the plant and disturbs the roots of nearby plants. The only time to completely uproot a plant is if you want the root. Otherwise, let the plant grow back so you can visit it later. If you need more stalks or leaves than one plant can provide, visit a few of them until you have what you need. Don't take too much from a single plant.

Some of the plants you'll encounter will be rare or endangered. Avoid disturbing these especially. You may not know all of them by sight. But if you tread lightly, you'll likely keep them safe too. Don't you feel better already, just knowing that?

And certainly, if you have any trash, make sure to toss it in a bin or pack it out with you. Don't leave something because it seems organic or natural, like apple cores or nut shells. Everything you bring with you should go home with you.

Only Harvest in Legal and Safe Places

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE permission to be on the land where you're picking. This is important in suburban and urban locations. But pay attention in rural places too, where the land might be protected by law.

People and governmental agencies are often happy to have you enjoy their wild lands if you ask and if you're safe and courteous while there. There's enough out there for all of us anyway. So, why wouldn't they let you get some too? But don't assume it's ok and just start picking. Always ask first.

Also, make sure you only pick on uncontaminated land. You want to stay away from places where various contaminants pool. And always consider whether there's been recent pesticide or insecticide use. Avoid roadsides, train tracks, demolition sites, sidewalk edges, golf courses, and industrial sites. This includes cropland that might have been sprayed with chemicals you definitely don't want to eat.

Avoid areas where the plants don't look healthy, even if they don't seem polluted. Stay away from black or scorched plants, sickly-looking plants, and places that smell rotten. These are all signs that something not quite right is going on there.

Always be mindful of other animals. You're out in the wild, after all. There might be deer, fowl, wolves, bears, and cougars out by where you're foraging. Stay away from them, and don't interact with them if they appear.

This is really about observing what's happening in the wild areas around you. Wild creatures are always watching. They need to know what other animals are nearby, what lands to use, and which to avoid. It's what keeps them safe. As a forager, you need to hone these wild instincts too. Be curious about who uses the land you want to visit. What kind of stuff is there? Is it good for you or not? These are the kinds of things you need to be thinking about.

Learn What's Tasty for You

LET'S BE HONEST. YOU'RE not going to like the flavor of every wild plant out there, at least not right away. We all have our flavor preferences. Some parts of a plant may taste better to you than others. Sometimes, you'll like the roots best, other times the stems. Other times, the whole plant is a winner. Or maybe, another plant just ain't it for you at all.

Rather than labeling a plant as "nasty," "slimy," or something else bad, be open to new flavors and textures. Try many kinds of plants. Try the same plant, but just grown in different environments. Try different parts of the plants you forage. Try as much as you can. You might just learn how to take something you thought was a disaster and make a tasty dish from it.

For example, dandelions can be bitter. But they're much sweeter if you grab the young leaves from a plant in the shade before it blooms. Then, cook these leaves in bacon fat. And now, you have an exciting dish that everyone will like. You'll need to experiment like this to see what tastes best to you. This kind of experimentation is fun and a necessary part of the forager's journey.

You can also give yourself a head start on finding foods you'll like right away. Check our grand ol' chart of wild food flavors at the back of this book. That will give you an idea about what plants you can find in your area with flavors you'll like.

Being able to find tasty wild foods is what's going to keep you interested in foraging. That's the end goal, right? Whether you experiment or use charts to get there, we all want something good to come to the table.

Consider Your Body

THE FIRST TIME YOU try a new wild food, eat it in moderation. You don't yet know if it agrees with you. If there are going to be side effects, let's keep them as mild as possible.

If you have unique health concerns, be extra careful. For example, if you're pregnant, have a compromised immune system, or have other health concerns, do a bit of research to see if this food will be good for you to eat.

Now that you know what not to do, let's talk about what you should do. Let's talk about planning.

WHEN TO FORAGE

One of the best things about foraging is how ripe and mature you can pick the food. When you go out, you can pick the ripest thing you see, eat it that day, and enjoy a depth of flavor you rarely get from the grocery store. Riffing dishes based on what's in season definitely works. You can create some tasty dishes this way. But, if you want something specific, you should plan according to the seasons.

Here's a starter list of what should be available in each season.

Fall

FALL MAY BE THE BEST season to forage. It's harvest season, after all. There will be lots of things that are mature or ripe.

Most **mushrooms** are best grabbed in the fall, especially if there's been a nice rain.

Nuts are best grabbed in the late fall, before the first frost. You might find them on the ground already.

Roots are best foraged in the fall too. However, try to grab these after the initial frost. This gives them the most flavor. Look for **chicory, burdock**, and others.

Some late-ripening fruit, such as **apples, crabapples, grapes,** and **persimmons**, are usually best grabbed in the fall.

This is also the time to harvest ripe **seeds** such as peppery **lady's thumbs seeds.**

After the first frost in the fall, you can go out for a second harvest of **leaves**. This is especially good for leaves that get bitter or tough in summer, such as **dock, sorrel,** or **dandelion.**

Late Winter and Spring

WILD GARLIC is best grabbed in February. This is a late winter item to forage.

Young shoots and leaves such as **wood sorrel,** and **nettle** are ready by January in some places. **Shepherd's purse** is best foraged in February and March. These plants have lovely leaves when young and fresh. That's the kinds of plants you should be looking for in winter, ones that are best when as tender as possible. **Horsetail, lady's thumb, and bamboo** are good examples of shoots to look for at this time.

Morel mushrooms are available as early as April and can sometimes be foraged during the summer too.

Berries, of course, are easy to forage during the late spring, summer, and fall. You just have to go and look for them.

Summer

FLOWERS: DANDELION, daylilies, and other flowers are best grabbed in the summer.

Lotus: All parts of the plant are best gathered in the summer.

Bedstraw: Ready by July and August –mid-summer in your location —when there will be flowers.

Silverweed: Typically found in pastures and near sand dunes and is usually ready by July, August, or mid-summer in your location.

Echinacea: The leaves and petals are used to brew tea, typically foraged during the summer.

Fireweed: You usually find these around burned forests or the borders of woodlands, typically picked in the summer.

Fruit: Most fruit will be available in the summer. For example, prickly pear fruit is available as early as April and is best grabbed from late May to early June. Cloudberry has tasty fruit and flowers and is mature by July and August.

If you need a more comprehensive list, we've got you covered. The reference section has a big chart about when to forage specific plants. You can also find this information under each plant included in the book.

WHERE TO FORAGE

There are prime foraging sites near you right now. And they are brimming with ripe, mature, fresh food. Perhaps, the easiest places to find this food are the places you can already access. Start out in your own yard if you have one. If not, ask your friends, family, or neighbors to check out theirs.

Don’t forget to ask around your neighborhood too. Your local gardening groups may have leads about the best foraging spots. And from time to time, they will know about volunteer opportunities to forage. For example, some invasive plants are edible. You can volunteer to be part of the team that removes -these tasty menaces.

Public spaces are another option for finding wild goodies. Try local parks first. But regional, state, and national parks are also great options. There’s usually a fee to use these parks. But they are typically larger and have more varied habitats to explore. This means more potential areas to look for tasties.

Of course, foraging may be easier if you live near open areas. Town edges and open fields are great places to forage. But foraging in dense urban areas is also possible. Look for creeks, swales, small open spaces, and undeveloped areas such as hillsides.

Maybe this seems creepy. But cemeteries are excellent places to forage. They have lots of greenery in big open plots. You’re sure to

find something edible and exciting there. I think it would make for a great story to tell your friends, too, about all the wild food you found around headstones and mausoleums.

And don't forget online resources. There are numerous foraging maps and apps with up-to-date information about the best places to go near you. Falling Fruit is a very user-friendly map with over one million foraging locations in the United States alone. Check it out at fallingfruit.org.

TEN TOOLS FOR FORAGING

Foraging doesn't require much. No special tools or clothes are needed. So really, you can go out and pick much of the food you see right off the bat. But these tools below will help you be more precise, avoid damage to nearby plants and harvest the more challenging plants out there. They are listed in what I think is their order of importance.

Something to Cut With

START WITH A GOOD SET of kitchen shears to cut leaves, delicate stems and shoots cleanly. You can also use them to clean up your harvest, for example, trimming off the brown or woody parts.

A survival knife and a mushroom knife are both handy for making clean cuts to remove thicker stems and roots from plants. This is especially helpful when you harvest closely grouped edibles like mushrooms. You can take exactly the parts you want.

A Basket

BASKETS ARE A CONVENIENT way to gather your harvest. Plus, you don't have to worry about everything falling out of your hands. You can get one cheap at a thrift store so that it won't break your budget.

Look for something with an open weave so that any liquid drips away from your harvest. This will keep delicate leaves and the ends of stems from rotting on your way home.

Or try loosely wrapping your haul in a handkerchief, vagabond style. The fabric will also allow any wetness to drip away while you're harvesting.

Pruners

PRUNING SHEARS ARE great for gathering herbs, branches, twigs, roots, and stems. They are like heavy-duty scissors that make short work of cutting through the thicker parts of a plant.

Cutting thick stems or branches is tough on the hands. And tools not made for this job can be dangerous when they slip. So, this tool will make foraging safer for you. Also, the clean cuts will do less damage to your harvest, so it will last longer. It will also do less damage to the wild plants you cut so that they have an easier time growing back.

Pick a sturdy set made of stainless steel. They will definitely get wet when you use them outdoors, and you don't want them to rust. Also, make sure they are appropriately sized for your hand—either left or right. And you want a durable spring mechanism. This will be one of your most essential tools. So, don't skimp on quality here.

Work Gloves

FORAGING IS DIRTY AND brutal on people's hands and nails. Gloves prevent prickly plants and thorns from wrecking your skin and help keep it cleaner. They are also a barrier against anything toxic or poisonous you accidentally touch. Canvas gloves or leather gloves are your best bets for wild food hunting.

Something to Dig With

 IF YOU'RE FORAGING for roots or anything in the ground, you will need something for digging. Dandelion, parsnip, chicory, and burdock roots can only be harvested by digging, so it's a vital tool for the job. This can be a digging fork, a garden shovel, or even a flattened stick.

The Native American tribes of the Columbia Plateau (eastern Oregon and Washington) and other areas made digging sticks to pull up roots. The one in the Pacific Northwest usually had a wooden handle of up to three feet. A sharp cross-piece made of bone or antler was attached to a wooden handle. The sharp part was to chop into the soil. This tool was one of their most essential objects in the pre-industrial era, and it's still used today when they go foraging.

I think making a digging stick would be fun. It's something you could do in a day, and it would bring an extra bit of realism to your foraging. It will also make your foraging much easier, especially in

the fall. And it will connect you to an age-old Native American tradition.

Full-Coverage Clothes

NOBODY WANTS AN ENCOUNTER with thorns or ticks. But it's likely in some of the places where you'll forage. Dressing in heavier clothes prevents these critters and others from disturbing your foraging experience and, worse, from taking them home.

Loupe or Hand Lens

SOME PLANTS LOOK VERY similar to each other. Seeing a plant's detail really close up can help you tell the difference between them.

A jeweler's loupe is the top-notch way to look at the tiny innards of a plant. Some even come with LEDs to help you see small details. But you can also just use a handheld magnifying glass.

Field Guide

THIS BOOK INCLUDES information on over 40 plants. It's definitely worth taking along with you into the wild. It's perfect because it lists some of the most common things you'll see out there. But, when you're more advanced, consider taking along a field guide. These have hundreds of plants. They are great for identifying rarer edibles.

Pruning Saw

THIS IS GOOD FOR TREE limbs and very thick plant parts. If you choose to harvest tree bark for medicinal uses, infusions or barbecuing, such as wild cherry or black birch, this tool will make harvesting simple.

A Brush

YOU’RE GOING TO ENCOUNTER a bit of dirt while foraging. It’s inevitable. Rather than take all of it home with you, use a soft bristle brush to get rid of some of it. This is especially useful for roots or other parts of a plant close to the ground.

Again, you don’t need to buy these tools immediately. You may be able to use tools you already have around the house too. But, if you want to get into foraging gear, start with scissors, a tool to dig and pruning shears. These will give you the most bang for your buck when getting started.

Now that you have the needed tools in hand, what kinds of fun can you get up to with them? That’s what’s coming up next.

FORAGING ACTIVITIES

First and foremost, foraging is about enjoying nature and having fun! Over time your appreciation for the wildness around you will grow. And you'll discover more ways to explore and appreciate your favorite foraging areas. But the outdoorsy part of foraging is only half the fun. The other half happens when you get back home. Here are some ideas to add more fun to your foraging indoors and out.

Things you can make

1. Make balms, salves, lotions, tinctures, infusions, infused oils, vinegar, wines, and syrups
2. Make crafts and art
3. Create soups
4. Create and use wild spice blends
5. Create personalized smudging sticks, incense, and potpourri
6. Make jam, marmalades, and preserves
7. Create fun tarts
8. Create delicious juices and cocktails

Things you can do

1. Explore a niche of plants, foods, or dishes in depth—for example, the 22 species of wild roses in the US
2. Make a blog or vlog about foraging
3. Add an afternoon of foraging to your next vacation
4. Seed save or reroot from some of the plants you harvest
5. Be a tour guide for friends and family in your favorite foraging spot

6. Start or join a foraging group to swap tips, foraging locations, and recipes
7. Make and give away unique gifts to people you care about

FORAGING IS A HOBBY rich in experience and expression. In this chapter, I wanted to introduce how foraging will enrich your life. Whether it's picking up new tools, a new favorite dish, or a new activity with friends, there's always something new and exciting to discover in this world.

Hopefully, these basics got you all primed to start foraging. Now, let's get into the plants.

PART II

ABOUT THE PLANTS

CHAPTER 3

BERRIES, FRUIT, AND NUTS

Nature's candy.

No matter your age or where you're from, an in-season fruit, berry, or nut is a gift we all want to receive. This chapter is all about where to go to find these gifts and when.

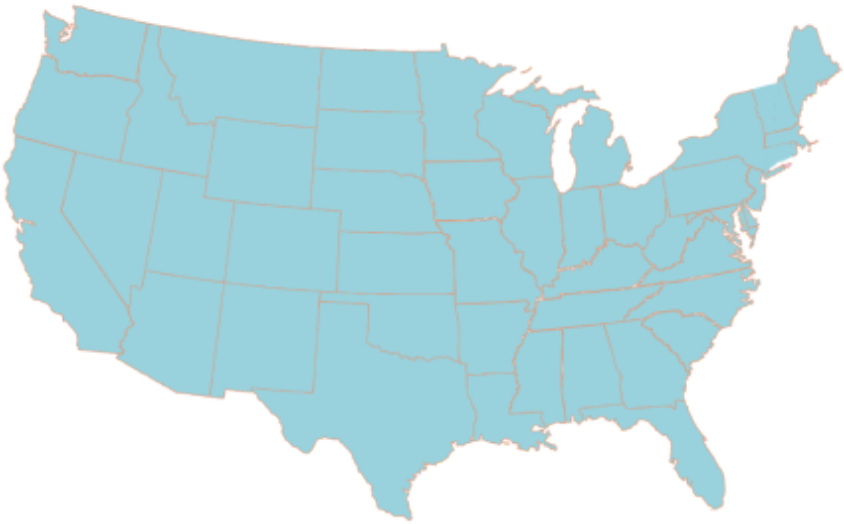
The great thing is that you'll probably be able to find some berry, fruit, or nut that's available throughout the growing season. But I suggest that you start looking for these edibles in wintertime. Why is that? Winter is an excellent time to see what'll be flourishing in a few months.

The birds and insects and animals will certainly be checking things out to determine where the tasties are. You'll need to beat at least some of them to the punch. Or all the best bits will be gone before you get there. That's why you want to go out in late winter and learn the lay of the land to see where the things you want to pick will be.

But there's no reason to make this a drudge. Here's an idea to make an event out of it. Celebrate the coming of this year's fruit with last year's fruit. What I mean by that is pull out any preserves, pickles, or dried goodies you have left from last season and make a nice breakfast out of them. It doesn't have to be lavish. Oatmeal and toast with last year's preserves and hot coffee could fill you up before you go on this year's surveillance hike.

Foraging is always an event, never an errand. That's why you'll love learning about these gifts from nature. Think of all the fun you'll have picking up and using these wild fruits, nuts, and berries.

Wild Strawberries



WILD STRAWBERRIES

Wild Strawberries don’t look impressive next to their monster cousins in the supermarket. But most everyone agrees that they taste so much better than store-bought berries. That’s why they're worth the effort to find. And you can find them in every state except Hawaii.

The leaves, flowers, and fruit are all edible. So, you can start using the plant as early as mid-spring. Look for ridged leaves in sets of threes. Their undersides are a bit hairy. The white flowers have five petals and a yellow center. There are also pinkish runners that spread out around the plant.

There are native wild strawberries found in Asia, Europe, and North America. They all use runners to propagate themselves. But birds also help spread the seeds around too.

Since wild strawberries are smaller than domesticated strawberries, you may want to harvest a lot if you’re cooking them. But if you can’t find a lot, you can add in a bit of mock strawberry or other wild berries to fill out your batch.

When to Look for it: Leaves began to grow mid-spring. Berries appear four to six weeks after flowering, usually in late spring to early summer.

When to Harvest it: Only harvest fully ripe fruit. Return in three days for a new harvest.

Where to Find it: Look for patches of the plant in sunny areas. They are not picky about soil type but don’t like it too wet. It’s especially common in grasslands, woodlands, and hillsides.

Lookalikes: Mock strawberry is also edible but less flavorful. The fruit of mock strawberry is bumpy, while wild strawberries are smooth. Also, mock strawberry has yellow flowers, not white ones like wild strawberries.

How to Harvest it: Cut fully reddened fruit at the stem with kitchen scissors so you don’t damage the soft fruit.

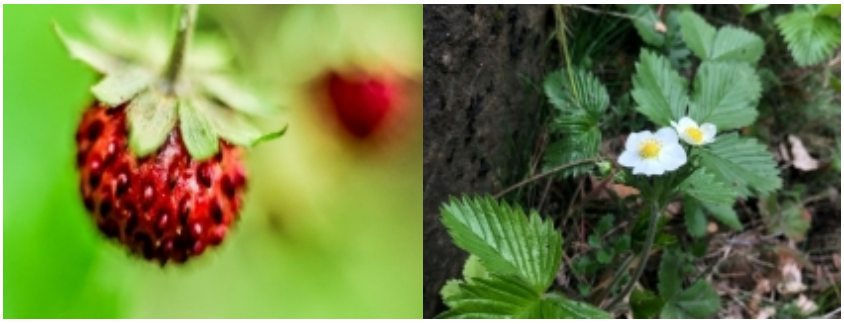
Nutrition Facts: Per cup, 32 calories, 7 grams of carbs, 5 grams of sugar, 2 grams of fiber, rich in vitamins C and minerals, including manganese, potassium, copper, and iron.

History: They were used 5,000 years ago in Asia as an alternative medicine. In North America, the leaves were used in medicine too. In ancient Rome, they were used to treat bad breath and help digestion.

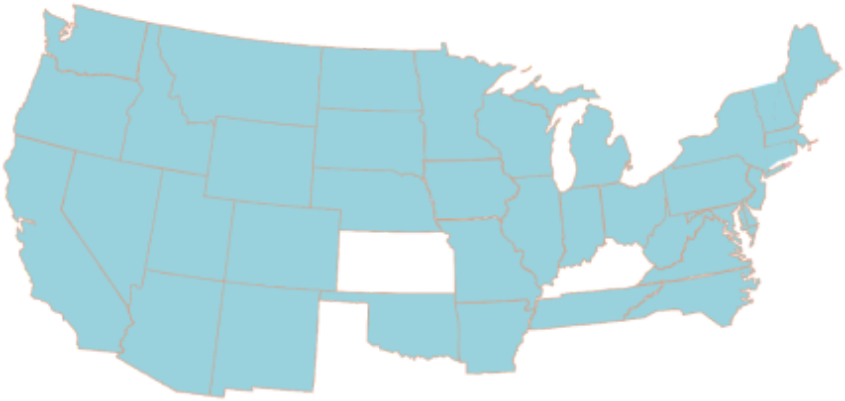
Flavors and Textures: A more concentrated version of domesticated strawberry with floral notes. The fruit is very juicy and tender when fully ripened.

Recipes and Uses:

- Great raw as a snack alone, in a salad, or with yogurt
- Salad of wild strawberry, goat cheese, and walnut with basil on top of toast
- Excellent in jams, jellies, sauces, and syrups
- Tasty in baked goods: muffins, pancakes, pies, bars, cakes, crisps, crumbles, scones
- Wild strawberry and cream cheese crepe
- Use to make a tea, a sparkling soft drink, or make sangria or infused alcohol
- Wild strawberry fizz with rosemary



Wild Raspberries



WILD RASPBERRIES

Black caps or wild black raspberries or just wild raspberries grow in almost every state. There are two species of black raspberries in the US. One is mainly found on the east side of the Rockies, and the other is on the west.

Wild raspberries are technically not berries. They are an aggregate fruit similar to pineapple. So, they'll break up in clumps when crushed. While they're on the plant, you'll notice the berries are all hanging out on one stalk.

The leaves cluster in groups of three to five and have toothed edges and white fuzz underneath. The white, five-petaled flowers later become the fruit. They are shrubby plants that grow up to 12 feet tall, but six feet is more common.

When to Look for it: Berries emerge in early spring in warm climates and mid-summer in cooler ones.

When to Harvest it: Wait until the fruit turns black and is slightly soft. If the fruit is hard, it will be very sour.

Where to Find it: They like the edges of woody areas. Berries in sunnier areas will ripen before those in partial shade. Plants in wetter areas will produce less fruit. You aren't likely to see them above 7,000 feet.

Lookalikes: Wild blackberries, but they are edible too. The main difference is that the white core you'll see on a raspberry stem won't be there on a blackberry. It stays with the fruit. Raspberries are also covered in little hairs.

How to Harvest it: You want to pluck the berry gently by hand. Pick the darkest fruit. It will not ripen after it's plucked. But the fruit ripens at different times while on the shrub, so you can return and get more. Only keep them in a shallow layer while harvesting, so the weight of the berries above doesn't squash the berries

below. Watch out for thorns. You may want to wear gloves and full-coverage clothes.

Nutrition Facts: Per cup, 70 calories, 9 grams of fiber, 16 grams of carbs, 2 grams of protein, lots of vitamin C, and antioxidants.

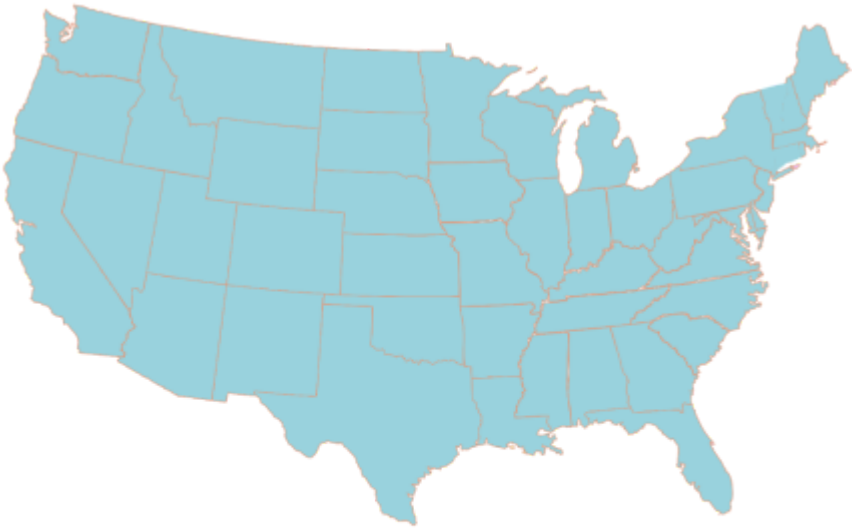
History: Native to North America. Native Americans ate them fresh and dried like raisins and in dishes like pemmican. The roots are made into a tea to treat bowel problems and wounds.

Flavors and Textures: Like a combination of blackberries and raspberries, sweet and tart flavor. A very delicate fruit that breaks apart in clumps when mashed slightly.

Recipes and Uses:

- Great in dairy such as black raspberry ice cream
- Black raspberry wine is a classic but is also good with brandy, champagne, rum, and liqueurs
- Chocolate and raspberry are a winning combination
- Chocolate and black cap Swiss roll
- Swirls, jams, jellies, preserves: New York-style cheesecake with black cap jam
- Berries and fowl are great together: duck, goose, chicken
- Chicken salad with black caps, grapes, and walnuts

Wild Blackberries



WILD BLACKBERRIES

Between the six common varieties of blackberries that grow in North America, you're sure to find a bush near you, no matter the state where you live. And all these species are edible. They can be enjoyed raw, cooked, or even frozen. You can use the frozen ones to chill a beverage you don't want to get watered down with ice. Then, eat the berry as a treat at the end.

When not ripe, blackberries are greenish. Over time, they become pink, red, and deep purple. Just wait until they turn black or dark purple to eat them. All the fruit doesn't ripen at the same time. So, plan to visit the plant several times during the season. During peak season, you can pick up to three times per week.

These plants love to grow into brambles where the stems curve onto themselves. When they reach the ground, they will develop roots. The stems also have hard thorns on them. The leaves look like they are made up of little leaflets. Each leaf has several sections. And the leaf's underside is slightly lighter than the top.

When to Look for it: Late spring to early fall.

When to Harvest it: The peak is midsummer.

Where to Find it: Sunny areas along edges where grasslands become forests. Similar places to raspberries above.

Lookalikes: No poisonous lookalikes. The only similar lookalike is the wild black raspberry that's smaller.

How to Harvest it: Look for soft, dark purple, and glossy fruit. Check for a strong berry smell. They won't ripen after picking. Wear protective gloves, so the thorns don't hurt your hands. Poison ivy and poison oak like to grow in similar areas; full coverage clothing may be a good idea. Only pick a day or two's worth. It won't last much longer than that fresh.

Nutrition Facts: Per cup, 52 calories, 1 gram of fat, 9 grams carbs, 3 grams fiber, 4 grams sugar, packed with vitamin C.

History: Used by Native Americans as food, for dying animal skins, and as medicine. Used in Europe for the last 2,000 years as both food and medicine. Used by the ancient Greeks and Romans too. They are found worldwide, so it's hard to know where they originated.

Flavors and Textures: Much like a commercial blackberry, with an "al dente" texture. Sweet with just a hint of sour, if ripe. They have seeds that add a bit of crunch.

Recipes and Uses:

- Substitute in any of the recipes above for raspberries or your other favorite berry recipes
- Wild blackberry barbecue sauce for chicken or pork
- Great with herbs such as oregano, sage, thyme, and rosemary
- Blackberry vinegar to use in marinades or salad dressings
- Your favorite salad greens with a blackberry, basil salad dressing
- It can be used for wines, jams, or even canning and preserves
- A great dessert topper and good for baked goods as well!
- Blackberry sundae with vanilla ice cream and black walnuts

RECIPE: WILD BLACKBERRY PLUM TARTS

These are fun summer treats; you can gather your own berries and plums to make this extra special. You could also add some fresh herbs to the cream cheese, such as basil or tarragon.

Prep time: 15 min

Cook time: 30 min

Ingredients:

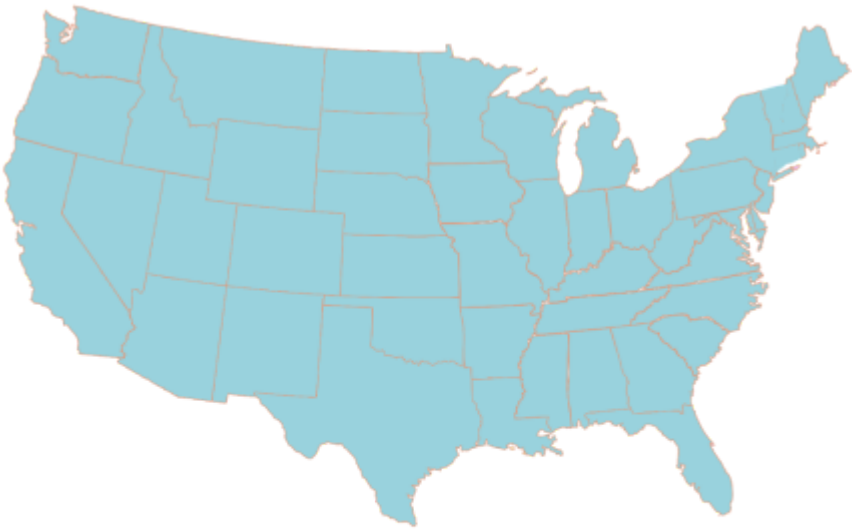
- 1 sheet of puff pastry
- 2 cups of wild blackberries
- ¼ cup of granulated sugar
- 3 plums, sliced
- 8 oz of softened cream cheese
- 1 tsp of orange juice
- ¼ cup of brown sugar

Directions:

1. Thaw the puff pastry overnight in the fridge
2. Mix the juice, vanilla, and granulated sugar into the cream cheese
3. Unroll your puff pastry, and spread the cream cheese over it, leaving a 1” edge around the dough
4. Slice the plums into ¼” slices

5. Put some plums on the edge of the cream cheese to make your first row
6. Then, a row of blackberries; repeat this with each fruit
7. Add the brown sugar to the edges of the crust
8. Put it in the oven for 30-40 min at 375 ºf
9. Remove once the pastry is slightly browned

Elderberries



ELDERBERRIES

Only use the flowers and the berries on this one. The stems and leaves are toxic. So are unripe berries. So, avoid green or lilac-colored berries. The berries usually ripen three months after the flowers first bloom.

Three kinds of elderberries grow in the US: red, black, and blue. Black and blue are used most often because you can eat them raw. Red elderberries have seeds that are very toxic until cooked. If you remove the seeds, you can eat the rest of the berry.

Some people prefer to cook all elderberries, even the blue and the black ones. They can be bitter when raw, and the seeds in the blue and black versions are also just slightly toxic. But they are safe to eat in small quantities.

Elderflower is a popular wild food because of its kind of tropical or pear flavor in flower form. People make tea or syrup from the blooms. You can expect to see the blossoms in early spring in warm areas and as late as July in colder ones. The flowers are white with five petals and have yellow pollen in the center.

Look for the signature bumpy stems to identify this plant. It gets to 10 feet tall at its maximum. But three feet is a more normal height. The leaves grow on opposite sides of the stem and have serrated edges.

When to Look for it: The plant will fruit fully in its second year. Blossoms can be harvested in early spring. Fruit ripens at the end of summer.

When to Harvest it: Only pick fruit that is dark purple and fully ripe. If some of the fruit has been eaten by birds, you can guess that some are ripe.

Where to Find it: Forest edges like other berries. Likes moist soil and full sun.

Lookalikes: Pokeweed, devil's walking stick, water hemlock. All can be toxic, so make sure that you look for the oblong and sawtooth leaf edges of the elderberry. Pokeweed leaves are edible before the berries form or are still white. Also, pokeweed's berries grow in a long cylinder rather than an unruly cluster like elderberry. Devil's walking stick has large thorns. Water hemlock will have green stalks like an herb, while elderberry has woody stems. Elderberry shrubs are also much larger.

How to Harvest it: Gently rub the clusters between your hands to remove the cluster of berries from its stem. You can also just cut the cluster off the shrub with your kitchen scissors.

Nutrition Facts: Per cup, 100 calories, 27 grams of carbs, 10 grams of fiber, 1 gram of protein, and 1 gram of fat. It is loaded with vitamins B and C, which are especially good for the immune system.

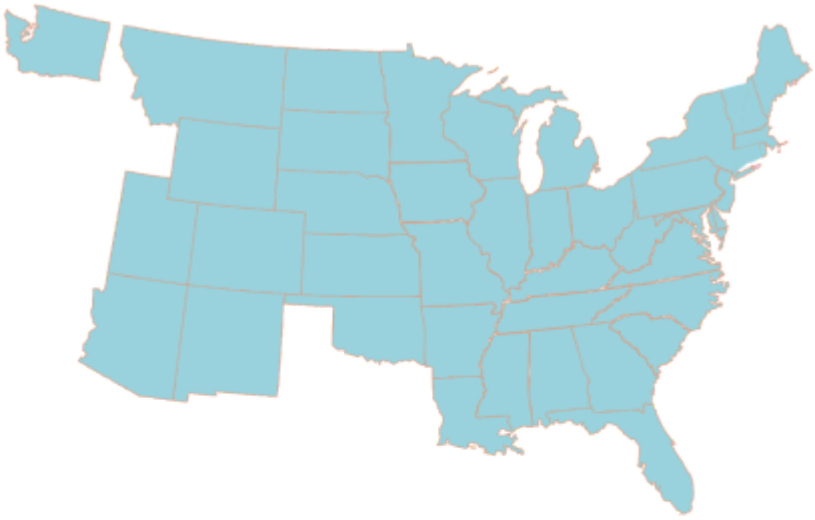
History: Used in medicinal tonics in ancient Greece. Used by the Coahuila Indians for dyeing fabric and making a sweet sauce. It was also used to treat fevers and arthritis. The Egyptians used it to treat burns and to fix oily skin.

Flavors and Textures: Balance between earthy and tart, a mix between blackberry and blueberry; moderately firm and juicy.

Recipes and Uses:

- Make elderberry syrup to use in drinks
- Great paired with stone fruit: apricots, peaches, plum
- Venison in elderberry and plum sauce
- Great with pork, chicken, and beef too!
- Make elderberry beer
- Jams and preserves are classic
- There is a sweet Elderberry soup with cornmeal dumplings that’s popular in Northern Europe

Wild Plums



WILD PLUMS

Do you remember that part where I said nature was moving seeds everywhere? Well, birds love wild plums. And they frequently disperse the seeds around. That's part of the reason this tree grows in more than 40 of the lower 48 states.

The trees are shrubby but can grow up to 30 feet tall. In the spring, it develops smelly white flowers that cluster in groups of at least two. In late summer, these develop into reddish fruit that is slightly oval and about one inch across. The inside is a translucent beige color. Watch out for the thorns on the branches. The leaves are oval with serrated edges.

The trees produce an abundance of fruit. If you find the right tree, you can literally pick your body weight in a few hours to an afternoon. The fruit is tart. Many people enjoy it raw. But most people use these for cooking.

When to Look for it: Late summer into fall.

When to Harvest it: Pick when they come off the stem easily. It's better to pick them underripe and let them ripen in a brown paper bag at home.

Where to Find it: It likes sunny areas in fields, forest edges, and thickets but can tolerate partial shade.

Lookalikes: Bullace, but fruit from this tree is edible too. Bullace has no thorns and fuzzy leaves.

How to Harvest it: Look for fruit that is nicely reddened and separates from the stem easily. If it doesn't come off the stem easily, put it in a separate container and rest it in a bag when you get home.

Nutrition Facts: One cup has 147 calories, about 20% of your daily vitamin C, and is rich in antioxidants.

History: The fruit was eaten fresh and dried by Native Americans. The fruit was also cooked down into a sauce. The bark was used to treat scrapes, while the root was a sour stomach remedy.

Flavors and Textures: Typical plum flavor, but sweet and slightly tart, with thick and slightly bitter skin.

Recipes and Uses:

- Often used for jams, jellies, and preserves: raspberry wild plum preserves
- Wild plum and goat cheese hand pies
- Pork chops with wild plum sauce
- Make a wild plum simple syrup and add it to iced tea, cocktails, or mulled wine
- Make a sweet pickle out of them with rosemary, thyme, and other aromatics, then stuff them with marzipan before serving
- Make maki sushi rolls with the sweet pickle, basil, mint, and cucumber
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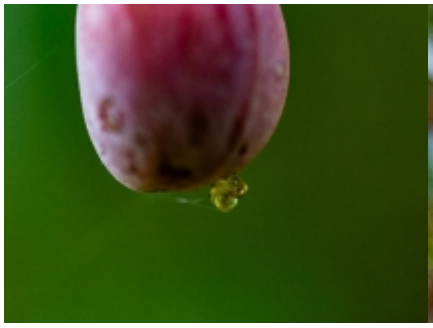
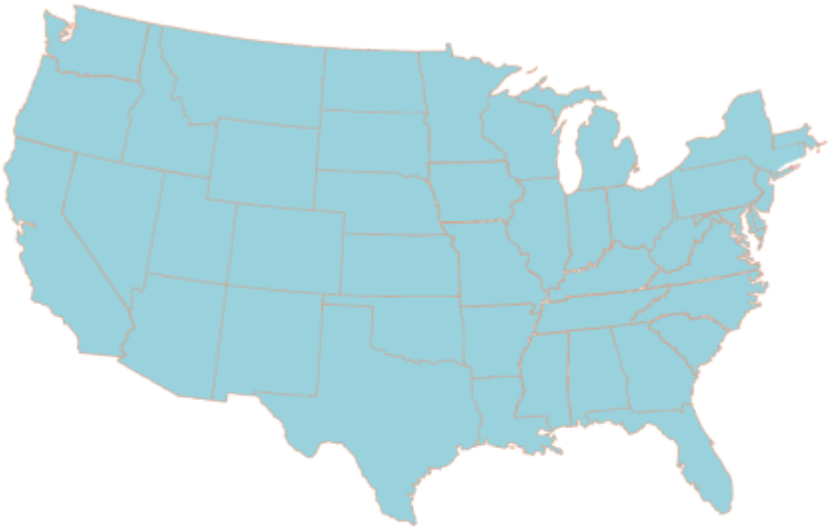



Prickly Pear



PRICKLY PEAR

Yeah, it looks intimidating. But it's all bark and no bite. I think you should check it out because it's widely available. You can find it in every state except Alaska. And you can harvest from this plant all year round. This includes harvesting paddles and fruit during winter. Who doesn't want fresh and ripe fruit in winter? It sounds too good to be true, right?

You might think that a cactus like this wouldn't survive in winter. But it uses glucose as an antifreeze. Sugar lowers the freezing point of water. That's why ice cream takes so long to freeze, and these cacti can live even in snowy temperatures.

You've probably seen Prickly Pear before. They have fleshy pads that can grow into tall, curved towers that look like abstract art as much as wild food. On top of that, the topmost paddles develop ruby red fruit that looks like a crown. And it's all covered in thorns. But trust me. It's delicious.

When to Look for it: Pick the fruit from late summer to early winter. Harvest pads all year long.

When to Harvest it: Harvest in the mid-morning when the plant is less acidic.

Where to Find it: Prefers rocky or sandy areas.

Lookalikes: There are 90 species of Opuntia or Prickly Pear native to the US, and they are all edible.

How to Harvest it: Always use gloves and tongs to avoid thorns. Only pick fruit that is deep ruby. Cut the fruit from the plant with a knife. Burn the spines off by holding the fruit over a flame with tongs. Then, peel with a vegetable peeler. Harvest pads similarly. But you will have to cut off the spines with a knife. Leave 2/3 or more of the pads and fruit so the plant population can flourish.

Nutrition Facts: Per cup, 42 calories, 10 grams of carbs, 1 gram of protein, and less than 5 milligrams of sodium. Rich in magnesium and calcium, which is excellent for blood pressure. It also contains flavonoids and phenolic acids.

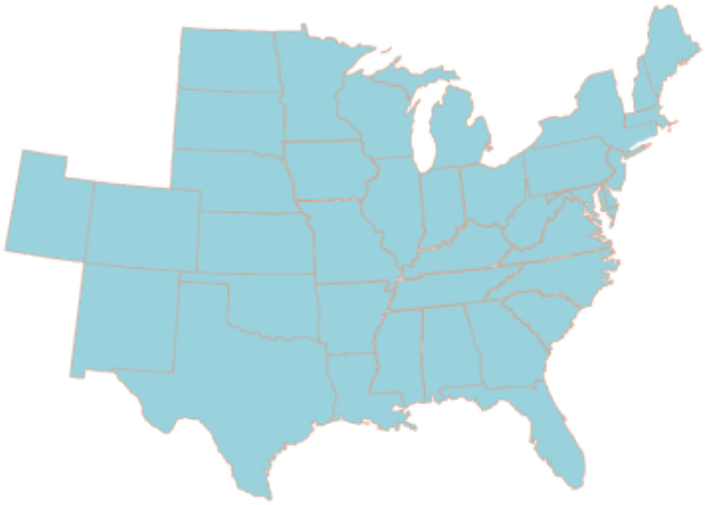
History: It has been used as a food source by indigenous people in the US and other parts of the Americas for thousands of years.

Flavors and Textures: Like a fruit salad with mostly watermelon in it. Very juicy when ripe.

Recipes and Uses:

- Fruit can be eaten raw once peeled
- The “Wild America” fruit salad with cubed prickly pear and the other fruit from this chapter you can find near you; sprinkle with honey and chopped yarrow as an herb
- Prickly pear juice alone or with other juices is very refreshing
- Make a simple syrup that can be made into jelly or added to drinks and desserts
- Prickly pear and tequila freezer pops
- Great with tropical fruit
- Cod with spicy prickly pear and pineapple chutney

Black Walnuts



BLACK WALNUTS

These are known as Persian walnuts and have a great flavor and smell. They have a wide range, from as far north as Ontario all the way to Florida in the south and along the east coast. But you may not find these trees much on the west coast and in the intermountain west.

Black walnut trees are gigantic, usually 50 feet or taller. The leaves are shaped like narrow ovals and have serrated edges. They have great autumn foliage that turns bright yellow. The bark is grey and deeply ridged.

The fruit is 2” in diameter. They grow in clusters at the end of the tree’s branches. Don’t pick the lime green fruit unless you plan on canning the whole fruit.

They are ready to harvest when the husks are beige, usually in the fall harvest season. You may want to wear gloves so your hands don’t get stained. You can collect dozens of these in an afternoon.

Let them air out for a bit, and then peel the outer husk. You can crack the inner shell using a nutcracker or a hammer.

When to Look for it: Fall is the best time to harvest these.

When to Harvest it: When they’re a dark beige color. If you’re canning, you can pick them green.

Where to Find it: Full sun with deep and well-drained soil that can support such a large tree. They need a lot of water, so they often grow near streams or creeks.

Lookalikes: Hickory nuts are similar.

How to Harvest it: Use gloves to prevent the oils from getting on the skin. Gather in a container, let them air out, and then peel the outside hull. Crack the inner shell with a nutcracker or hammer.

Nutrition Facts: Per ¼ of a cup, 193 calories, 8 grams of protein, 18 grams of fat, 3 grams of carbs, 2 grams of fiber, and 55% of your daily manganese.

History: Native to the eastern half of the US. They spread west from there. Native Americans used them to make tea. They were also used in dishes like pemmican and in soups.

Flavors and Textures: Strong, musky, with a bittersweet flavor.

Recipes and Uses:

- Great with other intense flavors like chocolate, maple, honey, or cherry
- Black walnut baklava
- Chocolate-covered black walnuts
- Pair with other nuts to make a mixed nut blend for snacking
- Sweet black walnut and sesame seed soup based on a traditional Chinese recipe
- Enjoy them when cleaned and roasted as a snack
- Can be added to brownies, cakes, and other baked goods

RECIPE: BLACK WALNUT RICOTTA ICE CREAM

If you don't want to use the cheeses, just use 2 cups of cream and 2 cups of milk for all your liquid. It will be just as good.

Prep time: 15 min

Cook time: 15 min

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup of milk
- 1 cup of heavy cream
- 15 ounces of ricotta cheese
- ½ cup of cream cheese
- 1 cup of sugar
- 1/8 tbsp salt
- 2/3 cup of black walnuts, chopped

Directions:

- Soak the black walnuts for two hours to soften
- Make sure the remaining ingredients are cold except for the cheeses, which should be at room temperature, so they are soft
- Blend everything except nuts until liquid
- Put the liquid inside an ice cream maker
- When the ice cream is almost done, mix in the black walnuts
- Freeze for 4 hours or overnight

Pine Nuts

PINE NUTS

While every pine tree has nuts within the cones, only some are edible. The nuts of pinyon and ponderosa pine are the two you can eat. These are super tasty, and there are many things you can do with them.

You can get the nuts from the pine cones once they open up. You do need to shell them, though. But the effort is worth it because pine nuts are super expensive. Part of the reason is that the trees take at least ten years to produce nuts. So, if you can find some for free, you'll save a lot of money.

The nuts are similar in size to sunflower seeds but are a bit more cream-colored. Ponderosa pines can be up to 200 feet tall, and the trunks are up to 4 feet wide. It has deeply textured brown bark and long needles that fan out like the sticks in the bottom of a broom. Pinyon pines grow up to 30 feet tall. The needles grow in pairs, up to 2" long.

These trees are primarily on the western side of the country, from Texas all the way up to the Dakotas and west to the coast. There aren't many commercial farms for pine nuts. The majority come from forests. So, you may see agricultural activity on the same trees you want to visit when foraging.

When to Look for it: Start looking for green cones in midsummer.

When to Harvest it: Towards the end of summer, they'll be ready to harvest.

Where to Find it: Both like full sun and deep soil that can support their extensive root systems.

Lookalikes: The Yew Pine is a poisonous lookalike. Most of the tree is toxic except for the red flesh around the female cones. You can tell the difference between the species by looking at the needles. Pinyon pine's needles grow in groups of two. Ponderosa pine has needles that make big fans.

How to Harvest it: Pick up the ones that still have intact cores. Wear gloves to avoid getting the sticky sap on your hands. You will have to shell them to get the nuts out.

Nutrition Facts: Per ounce, they have 191 calories, 19 grams of fat, 4 grams of protein, 1 gram of fiber, 71 mg of magnesium, and 163 mg of phosphorus.

History: Native Americans ate them fresh or added them to dishes like pemmican.

Flavors and Textures: A soft and creamy texture; a nutty taste like cashews.

Recipes and Uses:

- Pine nuts + basil + olive oil = pesto
- Great in pasta dishes
- Pine nut and parmesan encrusted scallops
- Spiced rice with ground lamb and pine nuts
- Toss into your favorite salad
- Use as a substitute for pecans
- Apple, cranberry, pine nut stuffing



CHAPTER 4

LEAVES AND FLOWERS

"That leaf!"

He screamed because some leaves make you do that.

Not everything is iceberg lettuce, you know, mostly crunch, little flavor.

There are greens out there with heaps of flavor.

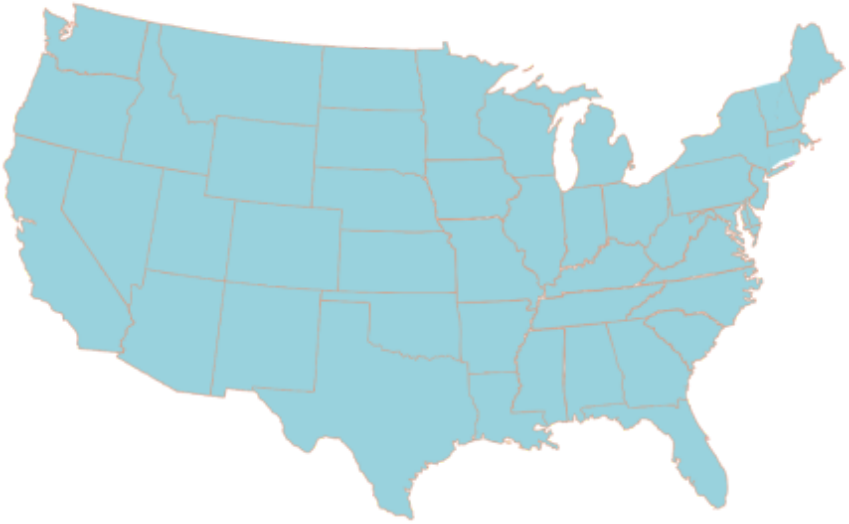
That's what my nephew discovered that night and what made him scream. In his case, he had his first fresh oregano leaf. That's what opened his eyes to the intense joy of taste.

Part of foraging is having experiences like this. You'll experience powerful joy, too, as you begin foraging and eating your finds. There are so many sensations to enjoy in the leaves and flowers of the wild plants out there: bitter, sour, nutty, herbaceous, numbing, and refreshing.

Many of the leaves and flowers included in this chapter are widely available in the lower 48 states. So, you should be able to find them pretty close to your house within a few hours. Some, you can see right in your neighborhood. But of course, they will be limited by the season. Usually, the best leaves are picked in the spring. And the best flowers are typically available in the summer.

There are ten wild plants in this chapter that I can’t wait for you to try.

Common Plantain



COMMON PLANTAIN

This herb or vegetable (don't call it a weed) is pretty much always available. You can also nibble on its cousins: Rugel's plantain and ribwort plantain. But common or Broadleaf plantain is most plentiful, which is the focus below.

Sometimes this plant is called rat tail because of its tall spiky flowers. They do somewhat look like a rat's tail. But this plant isn't gross at all. You probably have used it already, even if you didn't forage for it. This plant is mainly known for the seed it provides. The seed husks are likely in that jar of fiber supplement you have on the shelf. It's the primary ingredient in many commercial brands of psyllium.

In terms of foraging, check out the young leaves on this plant. Pull as many as you want. And you can do so by hand. This plant is not native and comes back readily. So, you're helping keep this non-native species in check by harvesting it.

You can identify this plant by its spiky flower stalk. The flowers on it are normally purplish. That's its most defining feature. But its rounded, fan-shaped leaves are also distinctive. It's a low-growing plant and loves to hug the ground.

When to Look for it: It's available all growing season.

When to Harvest it: Some say that waiting until the plant has flowered is better. But you can harvest the leaves anytime. Just be sure you only pick the young leaves from the center of the plant. The outer leaves are older and tend to be tougher.

Where to Find it: These plants like compacted soil but can grow under many conditions.

Lookalikes: Hosta generally grows much larger and prefers shady conditions. The flowers of hostas are bell-shaped and hang from the stem, unlike Plantain's tall spikey flower stalks.

How to Harvest it: As many leaves by hand as you want.

Nutrition Facts: Per cup, 28 calories. It's rich in magnesium, iron, calcium, and vitamins A and C.

History: Grown originally in botanic and monastery gardens. It was also grown for use as bird feed.

Flavors and Textures: Like asparagus with nutty flavors. Earthy and grassy. The leaves become waxier as they mature.

Recipes and Uses:

- Steep leaves to make tea
- Use like spinach, raw or cooked
- Efo Riro: A West African spinach stew with fish, crayfish, and beef, but with plantain in place of spinach
- Not spinach dip, plantain dip
- Strawberry and plantain salad with balsamic vinaigrette
- Fry the leaves and salt them to make a crispy snack, like kale chips
- Great with most meats

RECIPE: WILTED GREENS IN GINGER SOY DRESSING

This is a quick sauté with Asian seasonings that offers a lot of flavor. You can make this on any busy night with any neutral wild green you have or a mix of them.

Prep time: 10 min

Cook time: 5 min

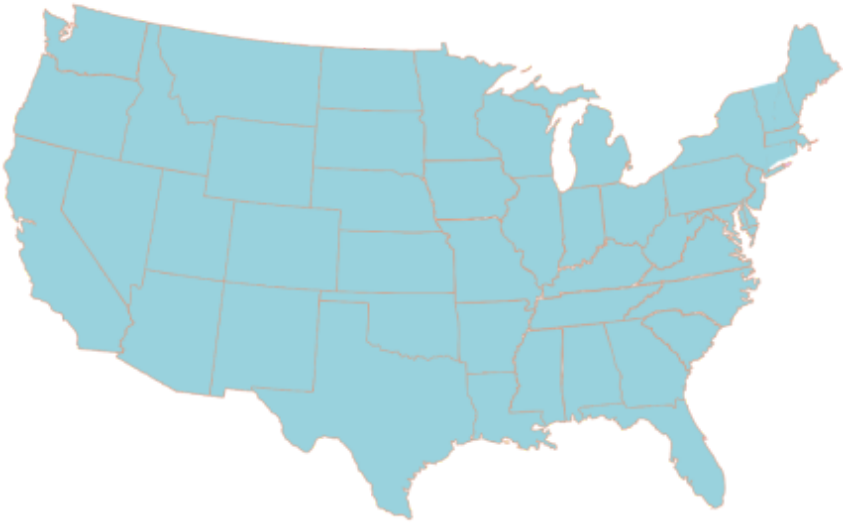
Ingredients:

- 2 tbsps of toasted sesame oil
- 4 cups of plantain
- 1 tablespoon of soy sauce
- 3 cloves of garlic, chopped
- 1 tbsp of powdered ginger
- 1 tbsp of seasoned rice vinegar

Directions:

1. Sauté the wild greens in one tbsp of oil until just wilted and very green
2. Mix garlic, sauces, spices, and remaining oil together to create the dressing
3. Toss the wilted greens with the dressing
4. Serve warm

Curly Dock



CURLY DOCK

This tasty species of dock grows in all 50 states. So, get out there and look for it. You can make flour from the seeds, a medicinal paste from the roots, and create baskets from the leaves. But, in this book, we are most interested in how to eat it.

This plant is related to rhubarb and garden sorrel with a similar sour flavor. Use the young leaves in dishes where you want a tart kick. To retain the delicate sourness, finely cut the raw leaves and sprinkle them over your dish like an herb. You can also blanch the leaves quickly for just a few seconds.

The seeds are a great way to identify this plant. They grow in clusters along long, skinny, vertical spikes. In late summer, they turn dark brown. The leaves all converge into a central core. Each leaf is narrow and long, up to one foot, and has curled edges. That's where the name comes from, its curly leaves. If you pull the plant from the ground, you'll notice a taproot, like a carrot.

When to Look for it: Best in early spring or after a frost, but you can harvest it any time of year.

When to Harvest it: Available all growing season.

Where to Find it: Likes wet areas. Look for it near puddles, ponds, or wetlands.

Lookalikes: Broad-leaf dock has leaves that are smooth on the edges. Curly dock has curly edges. Both are edible. Don't worry too much about mixing them up.

How to Harvest it: Use scissors to cut the leaves you want cleanly. This plant is invasive, so cut as much as you want. Look for the newest leaves that haven't fully opened. Or you can wait until a frost tenderizes the leaves.

Nutrition Facts: Per ½ cup, 21 calories, 4 grams of carbs. Rich in iron, phosphorus, and about 2 grams of protein.

History: This plant originated in Europe and has been used by humans since 500 BC. Most of the uses we know about from that time are medicinal. People would grind the root into a

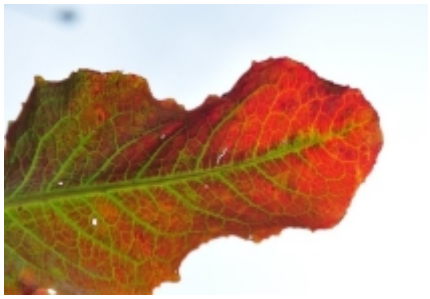
thick paste or poultice as a remedy for syphilis, constipation, and anemia. Typically, large leaves were used as tobacco pouches because they kept the tobacco moist.

Flavors and Textures: Slightly sour. They get more bitter as they get older. Younger leaves may numb your tongue.

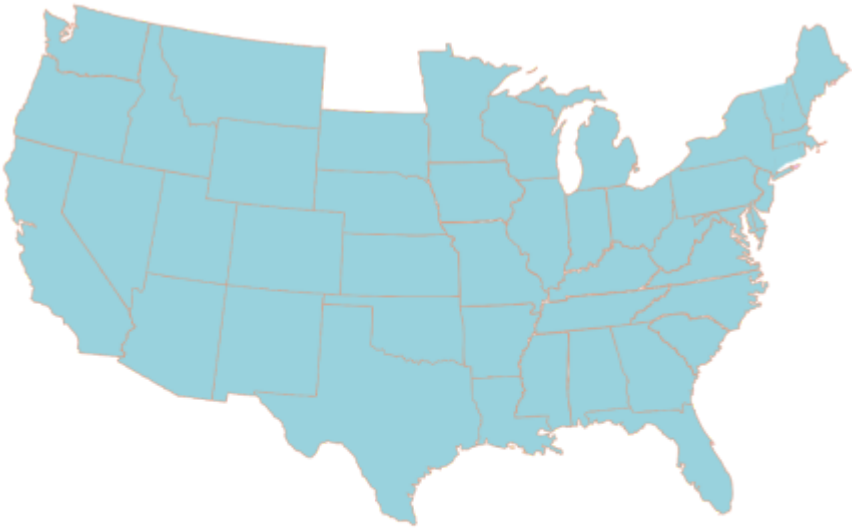
Recipes and Uses:

- Excellent cooked all the way through in a creamy soup or stew with root veggies and dill
- They can also be eaten raw in moderation if you pick them young and wash them well
- Your favorite pasta with pine nuts, butter, and dock
- Because of its sour flavor, try it with fish and seafood
- Try the younger, numbing leaves in spicy dishes; think Sichuan food
- Spicy tofu with soy sauce, sesame oil, and young dock leaves
- Hummus with dock
- Classic American picnic potato salad with dock





Watercress



WATERCRESS

Invasive Watercress is one of humankind's oldest known food sources. Because it's a fast-grower and available in almost all 50 states, you should be able to find some too.

You can eat the whole plant: roots, flowers, stems, and leaves. But most people enjoy the piquant leaf most, with a bit of the crunchy stem attached. It's known for its distinctive peppery flavor.

Watercress is in the same family as kale, collards, and turnips. So, you can use it as a substitute for any dish with those greens. Because it's pungent and spicy, it's particularly good at cutting through fatty dishes. So, think about serving it with rich pork or duck dishes.

It's semiaquatic and loves to grow in springs and ponds. At most, it reaches 10 inches tall and prefers to spread out rather than grow up. The leaves are small, slightly rounded, and have wavy edges. It flowers starting in early spring and has small white flowers with yellow stamens. Each flower has four petals.

When to Look for it: Watercress is at peak flavor in the spring. But you can return in fall to harvest new growth from the areas you cut earlier in the year.

When to Harvest it: You can harvest it all year round, even in the winter. Look for it in moving water that doesn't freeze.

Where to Find it: Harvest from clean water sources to avoid waterborne diseases. If you're concerned about the water source where you found it, boil it in salted water. You can also find it growing in very wet soil.

Lookalikes: Fools watercress smells like carrots, and regular watercress smells spicy. But both are edible.

How to Harvest it: You can pull clumps up by hand, roots and all. The roots are very shallow and almost look like thin white hairs. You can cut off the stems and roots when you get home. Or, put the roots in water to keep the plant fresh and alive indefinitely. Then, you can just cut off small sections of the plant using kitchen scissors, as you need it.

Nutrition Facts: Per cup; 4 calories, less than 1 gram of carbs, less than one gram of protein, 106% of daily vitamin K intake, 22% of vitamin A intake, 24% of daily vitamin C intake.

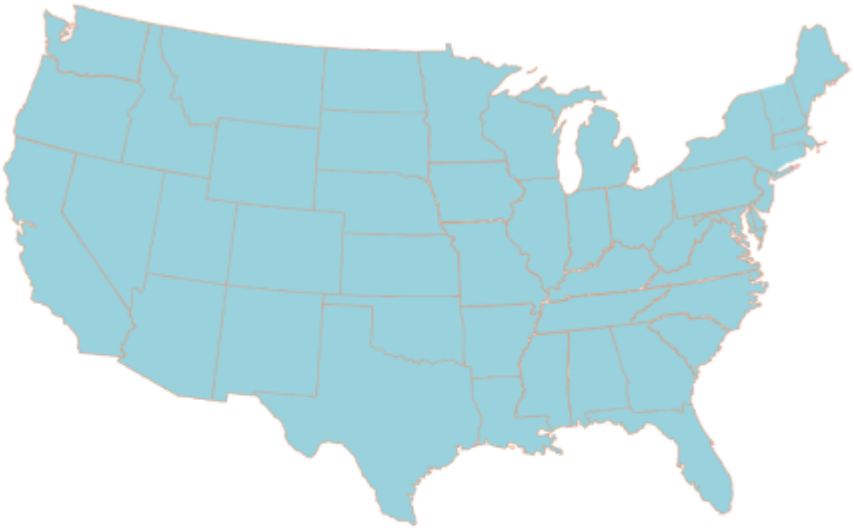
History: Watercress was used by the ancient Greeks, Romans, and Persians. The Greeks kept it at their hospitals to feed sick patients. It was also used as a breath freshener and palate cleanser. Louis and Clark routinely encountered watercress during their journey in the Louisiana Purchase. It was also likely present in 1621 when the pilgrims ate their first harvest festival in Massachusetts.

Flavors and Textures: Crunchy like cabbage when raw. Peppery and hot flavors like wasabi or turnip greens. It can be bitter when mature or overcooked.

Recipes and Uses:

- Eat raw in salads or as a sandwich topping
- Apple, watercress, goat cheese salad
- Make into the classic, creamy watercress soup
- Steamed with butter, salt, and lemon
- Watercress pesto over pasta
- Add it to your green smoothie
- Great with pork and lamb: I love braised pork ribs and watercress
- Garlicky prosciutto and watercress pizza

Lamb's Quarters



LAMB'S QUARTERS

Would you eat something called pigweed? That's another name for Lamb's Quarters. But don't let that nickname fool you. People also call it wild spinach because the leaves can be used in most recipes where you'd include store-bought spinach.

This plant is in the same family as amaranth. So, you can eat the leaves and the flowers in the spring and the seeds in the fall. The roots can also be mashed into a soap. It's not just a weed you will start seeing everywhere. It's the superweed you'll start seeing everywhere.

It grows up to five feet tall from a long, thin, rigid stem. Once it starts flowering, it's as tall as it will get. Its saw-toothed leaves and the dusty coating on the leaves are notable characteristics.

When to Look for it: Look for the leaves in spring. Flowers in late spring.

When to Harvest it: Harvest leaves when the plant is at least 5" tall.

Where to Find it: This is a common plant. Look for it in gardens, fields, or growing in disturbed soils. It's very hardy, so you can find it in many habitats.

Lookalikes: Orache; the flowers on Lamb's Quarter are oval and rounded, while orache has more diamond-shaped flowers. Orache is also edible.

How to Harvest it: Use scissors to cut young leaves cleanly. Don't take more than 2/3 of the leaves from a single plant to keep from harming the plant.

Nutrition Facts: Per ½ cup, 43 calories, less than a gram of fat, 4 grams of protein, 7 grams of carbs. It is a rich source of dietary fiber with no cholesterol.

History: People have eaten Pigweed since before the pyramids of Giza in Egypt were built. It has sustained humanity for over 4,000 years. In Roman times, people

considered it one of the tastiest wild foods out there. They ate the boiled leaves with salt, pepper, and butter. I think you should try this ancient recipe too.

Since the 4th century BC, people have used it as medicine. The leaves were chewed into a paste and put on the body to treat inflammation, scrapes, and insect bites. It also helped with upset stomachs when eaten. Native Americans ground up the seeds to make flour. It's a lot like buckwheat flour.

Flavors and Textures: Mineral-like taste similar to chard or spinach. The leaves have a texture described as pillowy when steamed.

Recipes and Uses:

- Use raw in a wild salad or cook it like Swiss chard or spinach
- Leaves can be blanched to use in hot dishes
- Bake into a gratin with cream, potatoes, and breadcrumbs
- Sauté with sesame oil, soy sauce, and garlic
- Blend into a green smoothie
- Excellent with chicken or in an omelet
- Sauté with white beans, bacon, and red onion

RECIPE: LOUISIANA LAMB'S QUARTERS SOUP

Tasty vegetarian soup with flavors reminiscent of the Bayou. Feel free to add diced polish sausage, shrimp, crabmeat, or all the above for more protein and flavor. You can also swap out the veg stock for chicken stock.

Prep time: 15 min

Cook time: 30 min

Ingredients:

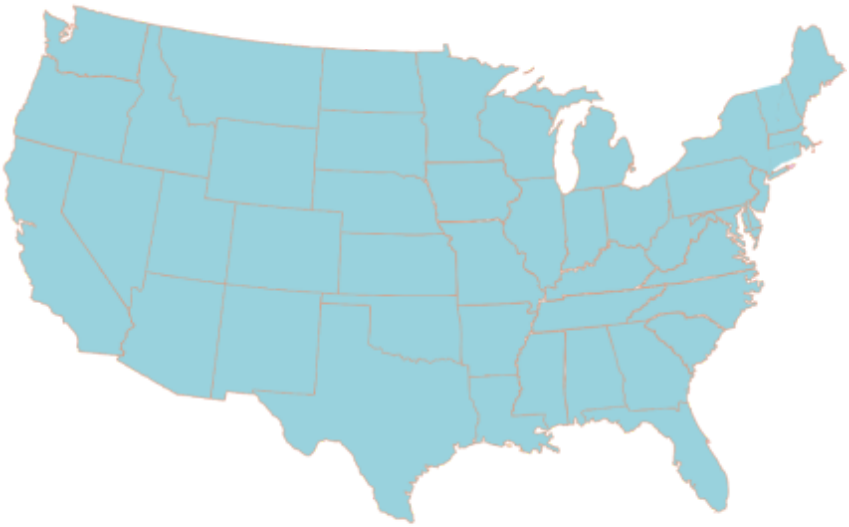
- 2 halved plum tomatoes
- 3 cloves of garlic
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 3 cups of vegetable stock
- 1 teaspoon of black pepper
- 1 teaspoon of cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon of celery seed
- 1 teaspoon of dried thyme
- 2 teaspoons of dried marjoram
- 1 tbsp of garlic powder
- 2 tbsps of sweet paprika
- 1 chopped large yellow onion
- 1 thinly sliced red pepper
- 2 chopped celery stalks
- 2 cups of fresh chopped lamb's quarters

- salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Take your first 12 ingredients, but only half the oil, and then blend these
2. Add remaining oil to a sauté pan, add onions, red pepper, and celery, and sauté until it's softened
3. Add sauté to the pot of purée and let it cook for about 35 minutes on medium heat
4. Once steaming, add in lamb's quarters to wilt them
5. Serve piping hot with your favorite bread or biscuits

Common Bedstraw



COMMON BEDSTRAW

Also known as cleavers, goosegrass, catchweed, Velcro plant, or sticky willy, this plant has tiny hairs that stick out of the leaves and stem. These hairs will latch onto your clothes or your dog's coat. Some people are allergic to the barbs, so be careful.

It has narrow leaves that come to a sharp point. About six to eight leaves grow per stem. It can grow up to three feet tall and creates dense patches that stick to each other because of the barbs.

This plant is pretty easy to find. There are about 15 species you might encounter. It's native to North America and grows in every state. The stems and shoots are edible. People also roast the seeds as a coffee substitute because it has much less caffeine than regular coffee.

When to Look for it: Spring and summer, especially after a nice rain.

When to Harvest it: It's less bitter before it blooms. Harvest as young as possible.

Where to Find it: It thrives in a variety of habitats. Can manage wet and dry soil but prefers wet areas. It also prefers part shade over full sun.

Lookalikes: Lady's bedstraw and hedge bedstraw, but both are edible as well. Hedge bedstraw has no hair, so some people like to eat it more.

How to Harvest it: The stems break easily, so getting a big clump by hand can be difficult. I suggest using a gloved hand to get the plant in the position you want and snip it with kitchen scissors. It sometimes sticks to nearby plants when you pull and can damage them. Watch out for that. It's abundant, so big harvests are possible.

Nutrition Facts: About 35 calories per cup. Excellent source of vitamin C.

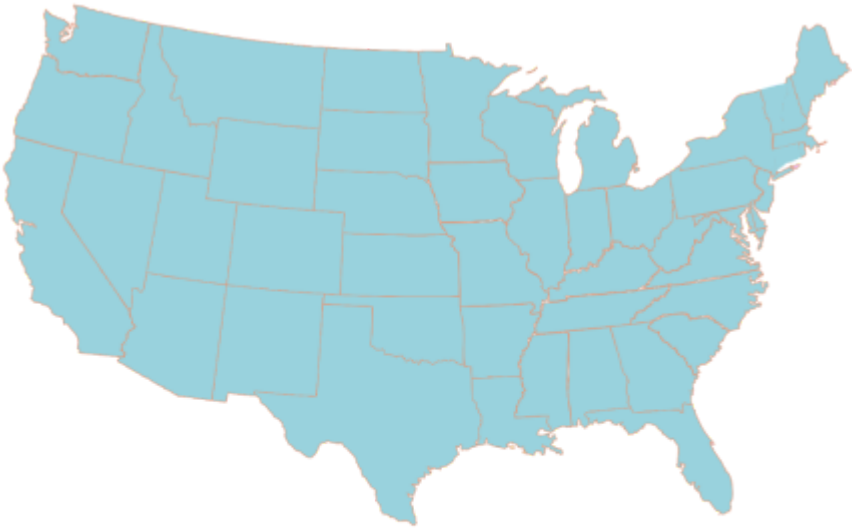
History: It was used as a mattress filling in Europe. Teas from this plant were used to treat urinary problems. Because the barbs make the plant cling to itself, people would ball it up to use as a strainer.

Flavors and Textures: Like a mild green bean, but very bitter. It may have some roughness due to the hairs when raw. Cooking shaves off some of the bite.

Recipes and Uses:

- Buttered like a vegetable; it must be boiled very thoroughly
- Great as a green –think kale—in soups and sautés: Sauteed bedstraw with white beans and garlic
- Sauteed bedstraw, cabbage, and carrots with buckwheat noodles in a peanut sauce
- Use in place of green beans
- Classic cream of mushroom soup casserole with bedstraw, bacon, and crispy onions
- Bedstraw and spicy pork quesadilla
- Pureeing, because of the burrs: Bedstraw pesto

Yarrow



YARROW

Walk outside, right now, to your nearest patch of grass. You'll likely find Yarrow there, no matter which state. It's in all 50.

You can use the whole plant –roots, flowers, and leaves—to make tasty dishes. But let's focus on the leaves for now because they are an underappreciated part of this plant.

Yarrow leaves are feathery, like an asparagus stalk that has ferned out. It kind of also looks like an asparagus fern. Yarrow is sometimes called squirrel tale because of its bushy or feathery leaves. The stems have a wooly appearance up close and will sometimes stick to your clothes.

Most people want the flowers. Yarrow grows a flower stalk up to about three feet tall. At the top are clusters of white flowers that bees, butterflies, and other pollinators just love.

When to Look for it: Available all season long.

When to Harvest it: Spring is best. Wait until the plant has bloomed. Rub the leaves between your hands to see if there's an aroma. If you smell licorice, it's ready to pick.

Where to Find it: Maybe in your lawn. It likes grassy areas and fields that offer full sun.

Lookalikes: Hemlock, which is poison. You can tell the difference because Hemlock will have a mousy smell and purple spots on the stems.

How to Harvest it: Use your kitchen scissors to cut leaves and stalks about 2 inches from the ground.

Nutrition Facts: Per cup, about 20 calories. A good source of vitamins A and C, potassium, and zinc.

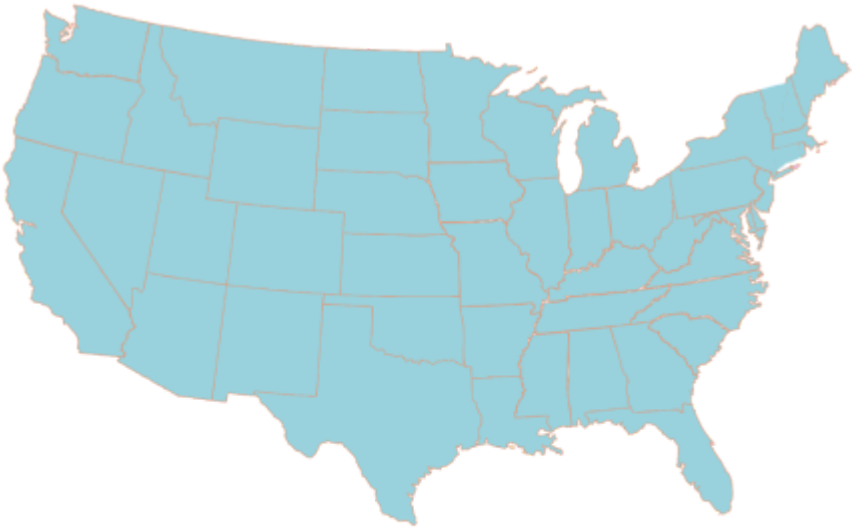
History: The oldest record of humans using Yarrow is 60,000 years old. Scientists found fossilized yarrow pollen in burial caves in Iraq. During the Trojan war, yarrow was used to stop the bleeding of injured soldiers. Native American tribes in North America also used the plant for burns and cuts. The leaves were often used for teas to relieve inflammation and body aches.

Flavors and Textures: The leaves and flowers taste a bit like anise and have a bitter bite.

Recipes and Uses:

- Use as a substitute for French tarragon
- Yarrow aioli to put on sandwiches, roasted potatoes, or crabcakes
- Dry the leaves to use as an herb all year long
- Infuse yarrow in alcohol, vinegar, teas, or oils
- Blackberry yarrow cocktail or vinaigrette or tea
- Make yarrow beer
- Chicken thighs smothered in yarrow cream sauce

Self-heal



SELF-HEAL

Self-heal is an excellent plant for beginning foragers to collect. It's easy to recognize and doesn't have any dangerous lookalikes. Plus, it's easy to find. It grows in every state except Hawaii.

There are many studies about the benefits of self-heal. It's primarily known for its medicinal properties. It's a painkiller, anti-viral, and helps heal wounds. Imagine the benefits you'd get if you added a few of its leaves to your next salad. It also makes a tasty tea.

Self-heal has tube-shaped flowers that attract lots of pollinators. The flower's base is green and typically has purple petals that stick out of the base. Imagine a tiny, green, unripe pineapple with purple flowers coming out of it. That's what the self-heal flower looks like to me. This base dries out and becomes the seed pod. The plant also has a reddish stem that's square-shaped.

When to Look for it: Available all growing season.

When to Harvest it: Collect the leaves before the plant flowers. Early spring is best for the leaves. The flowers bloom in early summer.

Where to Find it: It likes somewhat moist and grassy areas, both sunny and partly shady. So, look for it in fields, creek banks, or where fields just give way to forests. It's low growing; you may have to sift through tall grasses to find it. It likes to be surrounded by other plants.

Lookalikes: Henbit has small pinkish flowers that resemble orchids. But the flowers ring around the upper leaves rather than coming out of the base. The flowers are narrower than self-heal. Moreover, its leaves are shorter than self-heal's.

How to Harvest it: Take your kitchen scissors and slice the plant after the first set of healthy leaves on the stem. This kind of pruning encourages branching out.

Nutrition Facts: Self-heal leaves have fewer than 60 calories per cup. The plant is also a good source of vitamins A, B, C, and K.

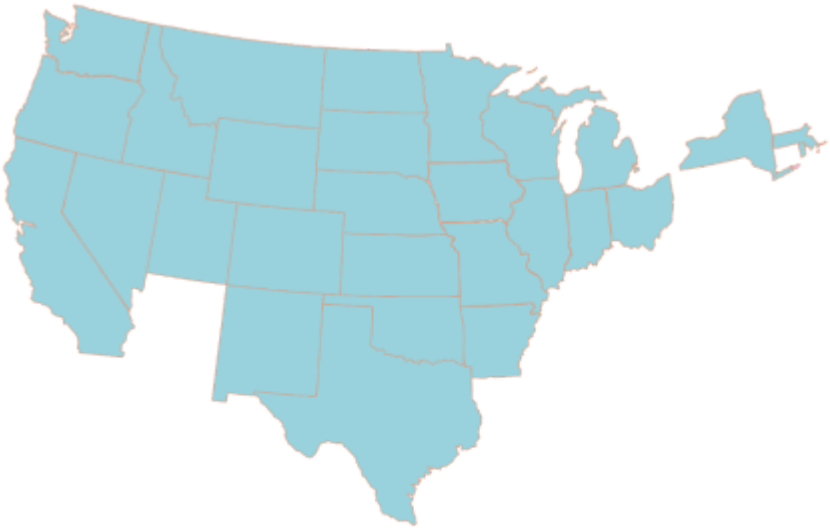
History: This plant gained notoriety in Europe for its health properties in the 16th century. It was prized for wound healing. The name self-heal came in the 17th century. By the 19th century, people were spreading this plant worldwide. The Cherokee cooked the leaves down to use as a vegetable.

Flavors and Textures: Fairly neutral in comparison to other wild edibles. Slightly bitter and sweet with a hint of rosemary. It has been described as like eating Romaine lettuce.

Recipes and Uses:

- Chop leaves to get one to two teaspoons and add to boiling water for tea
- Sauté the leaves like greens
- Sauteed self-heal with white beans and ham broth
- Dry the leaves to use for up to nine months
- Ground dry leaves into a powder to add to smoothies
- Use like lettuce in raw salads
- Self-heal Caesar salad

Wild Roses



WILD ROSES

There are over 20 species of edible wild roses growing in the lower 48 states. Here, I'll focus on two species. I'm going to focus on these because you might find them easily. You can access the Nootka rose if you're on the country's western side. In the east, there is the Prairie rose.

You can use many parts of the plant, including the buds, petals, leaves, and hips or fruit. You can even peel and eat young rose shoots. But most people want the fragrant blooms to scent all kinds of liquids: water, oil, vinegar, dairy, and alcohol.

Wild roses look a bit different from garden roses. They are usually a light pink and only have between three to seven petals. Because of this, the blossoms don't form the tight rosettes you see in garden roses. Wild roses have flatter, more delicate-looking blooms with a single layer of petals. The plants tend to form dense thickets and have a strong scent that attracts birds and pollinators.

When to Look for it: Available all growing season, but different times of year are best for each part of the plant.

When to Harvest it: Flowers are available in spring and early summer. Hips develop in the fall. Leaves are available all year.

Where to Find it: Roses like full sun and can be found in many habitats. They prefer good access to water, so look for them in wetter areas such as near swales or streams.

Lookalikes: One of the other 20 varieties of wild roses in the US. But they are all edible.

How to Harvest it: Cut the blossoms near the base with a knife. Be careful of thorns! Pluck the petals from the green base.

Nutrition Facts: Rich in vitamin C and E. Teas themselves are virtually calorie-free.

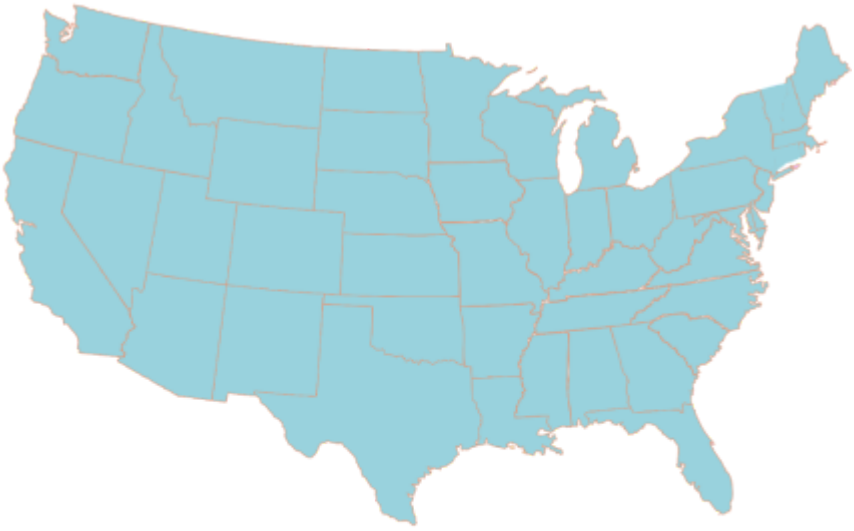
History: Roses existed for 35 million years before humankind. We know this because a prehistoric fossil of a rose was found in Colorado. The first cultivated roses we know of were in China 5,000 years ago. They showed up in the Middle East 2,000 years ago.

Flavors and Textures: A potent mixture of green apple and strawberry. The petals are satiny in your mouth.

Recipes and Uses:

- Great with other florals, like lavender, chamomile, thyme, saffron, and almond
- Sparkling wild rose wine or lemonade
- Grind dried petals and add them to granulated sugar to rim your drinks
- Make wild rose water and add it to your favorite pastries
- Add wild rose water (tea) to fish, lamb, or chicken stews
- Wild rose petal salad with chicory, ham, and goat cheese
- Berries, granola, and cream with wild rose syrup

Dandelions



DANDELIONS

There's something about the yellow Dandelion flower that I can't ignore. As a beginner forager, you shouldn't either. It's easily identifiable and plentiful. And it grows in every state. So, why not make use of it? There are fun uses for all of this plant, except the stem.

Dandelion's sawtooth leaves are edible raw, or cooked. You can infuse foods with the flavor of the flowers. The root is edible too. It makes a great tea or vegetable. Because the stems have a milky and bitter substance, you can add them to your compost pile.

People describe the blossoms as toothy because there are so many petals on each flower. The petals grow in a circular pattern around the long green stems that support the flowers. There can be up to 10 flowers per plant. The leaves are also distinctive, with a sawtooth shape.

When to Look for it: Leaves are available all growing season. Flowers are most abundant in early summer but established plants can bloom again in the fall.

When to Harvest it: Spring when the leaves are tender. Early summer for the flowers.

Where to Find it: They like full sun but can grow almost anywhere: lawns, fields, or forests.

Lookalikes: Cat's ear has branched stems with multiple flowers. Dandelions only produce one bloom per stem. Also, cat's ear has hairy leaves, while dandelion leaves are hairless. Cat's ear is also edible.

How to Harvest it: Use a knife to cut the top of the root to hold leaves in their cluster. You can pick the flowers from the stems by hand.

Nutrition Facts: Per 1 cup of greens, 25 calories, 5 grams of carbs, 2 grams of fiber, and 1.5 grams of protein. 112% of daily vitamin K and 32% of daily vitamin C.

Teas from the flowers are virtually calorie-free. A great source of vitamins A, C, E, and K. They also contain lots of calcium, iron, magnesium, and potassium.

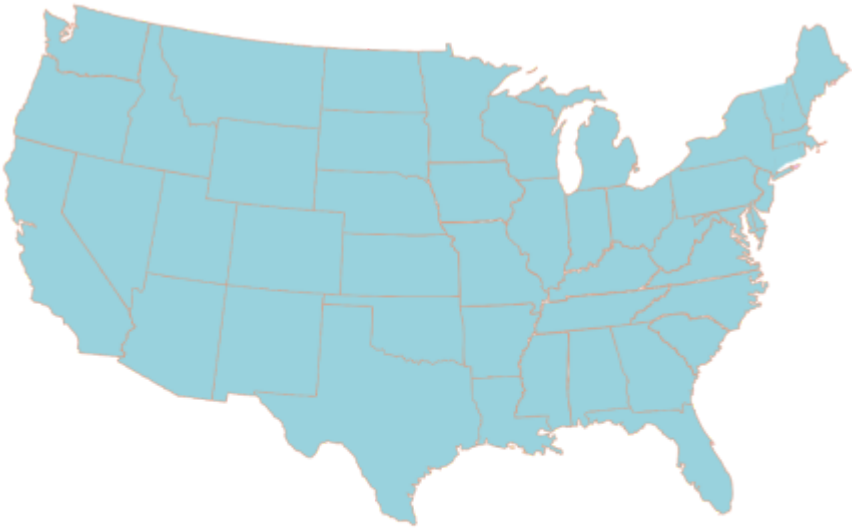
History: Traditional Arabian and Chinese medicine have used dandelion for over 1,000 years. It is a natural diuretic. Ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans also used the flower. Early Puritan settlers carried them to the western hemisphere to use as crops.

Flavor and Textures: Dandelion florets have a sweet flavor similar to honey. The green bases can be bitter and are often not used. The leaves of dandelions are tangy, slightly bitter, and have a texture like chard.

Recipes and Uses:

- Use the petals to make tea or mead
- Sautéed dandelion greens with bacon and onions are a classic combination
- Infuse vinegar or oil, honey, or simple sugar syrup with the petals
- Batter and fry the flowerheads into fritters
- Add young, and fresh dandelion leaves to your salad mix
- Goat cheese and sautéed dandelion green panini
- Dandelion flower butter cookies

Honeysuckle



HONEYSUCKLE

I remember picking the honeysuckle blossoms and sucking the nectar from the tiny flowers as a kid. It was one of the best parts of spring. But I never ate the berries because some are toxic. That's a good rule for a beginning forager looking at honeysuckle. Only use the flowers unless you're sure of the species.

There are about 20 varieties in the US. You'll be able to find one of them in all the lower 48 states. Some are native. Others are invasive. The native varieties are most easily found in the plains states and east.

The best way to tell the difference between the natives and the invasives is to look inside a woody stem. The invasives will have a hole in the middle of the stem. The natives will be solid.

You'll probably notice the sweet smell of a honeysuckle plant before you see it. That smell comes from the tiny trumpet flowers. The flowers are usually yellow or orange with a pink hue near the base. They grow in clusters of blooms, from two to about six. The plants form shrubby or dense vines with dark green leaves that grow on opposite sides of the stem from each other.

When to Look for it: Pluck flowers in the spring. Some vine honeysuckles bloom in summer. Avoid berries, which show up in the fall if you aren't sure of the species.

When to Harvest it: Pluck flowers early in the morning. The fragrance is strongest at night to attract pollinators.

Where to Find it: The more sun the plant gets, the more blooms it will have. But it can tolerate some shade. It prefers wet but not soaked soil. It also likes to climb over other plants, so look for it at the edges of treed areas or areas with shrubs.

Lookalikes: Many species look very similar, but you can use all the flowers similarly.

How to Harvest it: Only take the open flowers. Discard the green base. Don't overharvest if taken from a native plant. You want the nectar from the flower, so don't rinse the blooms. It will get rid of the nectar. Only pick clean and healthy blossoms to make your job easier.

Nutrition Facts: The flowers are virtually calorie-free when used in teas and to infuse liquids. A good source of vitamin C.

History: In ancient China, honeysuckle was used for snake bites. In Europe during the Middle Ages, people used it as an antibacterial. Japanese honeysuckle came to the US in the early 19th century. The leaves make excellent goat food.

Flavors and Textures: Slightly sweet, similar to honey.

Recipes and Uses:

- Salmon in honeysuckle garlic glaze
- Infuse honeysuckle in alcohol, vinegar, teas, oils, or dairy
- Honeysuckle panna cotta
- Sparkling honeysuckle ginger iced tea
- Sprinkle flowers over a salad
- Pear, pistachio, and goat cheese salad with honeysuckle vinaigrette
- Roasted pumpkin with honeysuckle butter and smoked salt
- Great with other floral and aromatic flavors: rose, mint, almond, chamomile, citrus, sorrel



CHAPTER 5

STALKS AND SEEDS

Stalks and shoots are the first things you'll harvest each year.

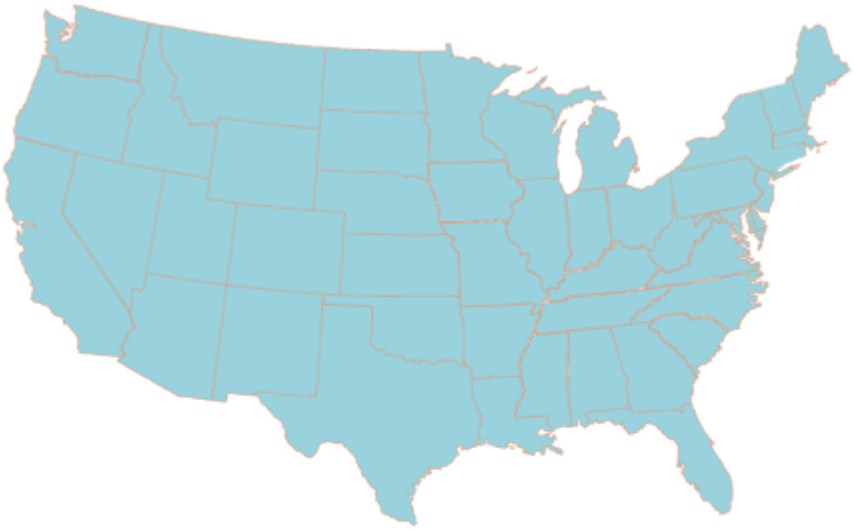
Just when plants start to wake up for the season, that's when the stalks and shoots are available. That makes them a celebratory food for me. The first fresh veg of the season is a moment to create a unique dish, have a few friends over, and make some memories.

Seeds are the other bookend to the growing season. They show up when the plant has finished its year-long maturation cycle. And they represent the promise of fertility for next year. You can toast them up and enjoy their nutty flavors. Or you can dry them and plant them next year. That sounds like another reason to celebrate to me, perhaps a harvest celebration.

So, as you read through this chapter, take a minute to consider how you can turn these foods into a party, a gathering, or a family dinner. The recipes and dish ideas you'll see will help you. But I know you have your own flair, something distinctive to add to these fantastic foods.

Not only are these foods a reason to celebrate. They are filling, flavorful, and full of fiber and protein. That's why I can't wait for you to learn about these six kinds of wild shoots, stalks, and seeds you'll be able to find out there.

Wild Asparagus



WILD ASPARAGUS

Everyone I know loves asparagus. So, I'm not sure why it's only number 20 on the list of most popular veggies in the US. Maybe it's because most people have never had a fresh stalk, just harvested a few hours ago. You can be one of the lucky people to taste this delicacy.

Pick asparagus as young and tender as you can. If you wait too long, the stems get woody, and the stalks begin to flower. If it's too woody, you can shave the harder parts off with a potato peeler or snap them off.

You'll know wild asparagus when you see it. It looks just like the asparagus you buy at the store because it is. The plant you're looking at just came from seeds that escaped cultivation.

When to Look for it: Late winter and early spring are best, but it grows all year round. Most people stop harvesting mid-summer to let the plant recuperate for next year.

When to Harvest it: When stalks are more than 5" tall or the diameter of your index finger.

Where to Find it: Wild Asparagus likes full sun and water. So, look for it near ponds, irrigation, or natural swales and puddles.

Lookalikes: Horsetail; the stalks on horsetail are browner than the green of asparagus.

How to Harvest it: Use a knife or scissors. Cut as close to the ground as possible. Don't take the berries. They will make you sick.

Nutrition Facts: Per stalk, 3 calories, no fat, less than 1 gram of carbs, rich in potassium.

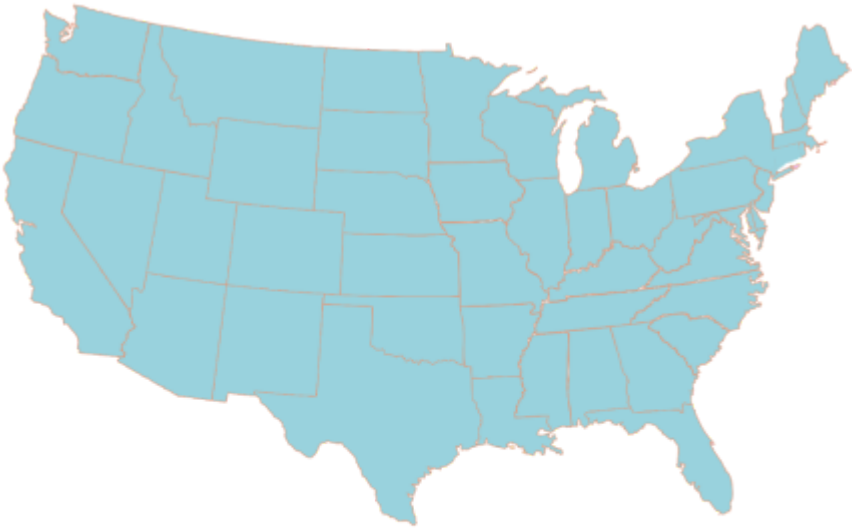
History: Asparagus hails from Mesopotamia, which is now Iraq. It liked all the water around the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. It has been used as food for over 2,000 years. Asparagus also has medicinal properties. It was used in ancient Greece to reduce stomach and bowel inflammation and to promote urination.

Flavors and Textures: Subtly sweet-when young, slightly bitter flavor that increases with maturity. Grassy undertones. Crunchy when raw, like a green bean.

Recipes and Uses:

- Eat raw or blanched in salads
- Coat with olive oil and grill over high heat for 3 minutes; serve with salt and lemon juice
- Grilled zucchini and asparagus salad with mint and yarrow
- Purée with seasoned stock into a cold or hot soup
- Great with eggs: asparagus frittata with hollandaise
- Roasted asparagus and potato hash with poached eggs
- Great with Asian sauces and flavors: soy sauce, garlic, sesame

Cattails



CATTAILS

A plant that looks like the tail of a cat. That doesn't sound very appetizing. But there are many parts of this plant that you can eat. The flowers are edible before they are fertilized. So are the pollen and roots. But here, we are most interested in the shoots.

You've probably seen cattails when boating, hiking, or swimming near a pond or lake. Cattails are located throughout the lower 48. So, just take a trip to a lake, pond, river, or wetland to find them.

When young, cattails look like giant leeks or wild onions. The largest of them will be about three feet tall when you want to harvest them. And they have long leaves shaped like blades.

When to Look for it: You can enjoy parts of the cattail all growing season.

When to Harvest it: Get shoots in early spring before the flowers are pollinated. Flowers and pollen are available in the summer. Harvest roots in the fall.

Where to Find it: Cattails grow in clumps at freshwater marsh edges up to two feet deep.

Lookalikes: Blue flag and yellow flag. Cattails smell like grass when fresh. If you notice a spicy or sweet smell, it's not a cattail. Also, cattails don't have flat stem bases.

How to Harvest it: You may need tall boots to reach them. Cut them at the lower part of the stem, put them in water, and clean them thoroughly. You'll have to change the water multiple times. Then peel away the outer leaves until you get to the tender shoot underneath.

Nutrition Facts: Per cup, 25 calories, they offer a decent amount of manganese, magnesium, vitamin K, dietary fiber, iron, vitamin B6, and sodium.

History: They were used a lot in Native American cooking, to weave baskets and mats, and as medicinal herbs. The top of the plant that looks like the tail was sometimes used to stuff pillows.

Flavors and Textures: The shoot tastes like a cucumber in texture and flavor but is a bit more bitter.

Recipes and Uses:

- Use as a substitute for cucumbers
- Cattail sour cream dipping sauce with yarrow and dill
- Raw like a carrot
- Raw in a salad: cattail chicken salad
- Cattail stalk tea sandwiches with or without caviar
- Infuse into alcohol or simple syrup
- Cattail stalk martini or margarita
- Garlic dill cattail pickles with your favorite sandwich

RECIPE: CATTAIL PANZANELLA SALAD

This is a recipe for a scrumptious bread salad, but with Cattails. Typically, cucumbers would be used in a salad like this.

Prep time: 15 min

Cook time: none

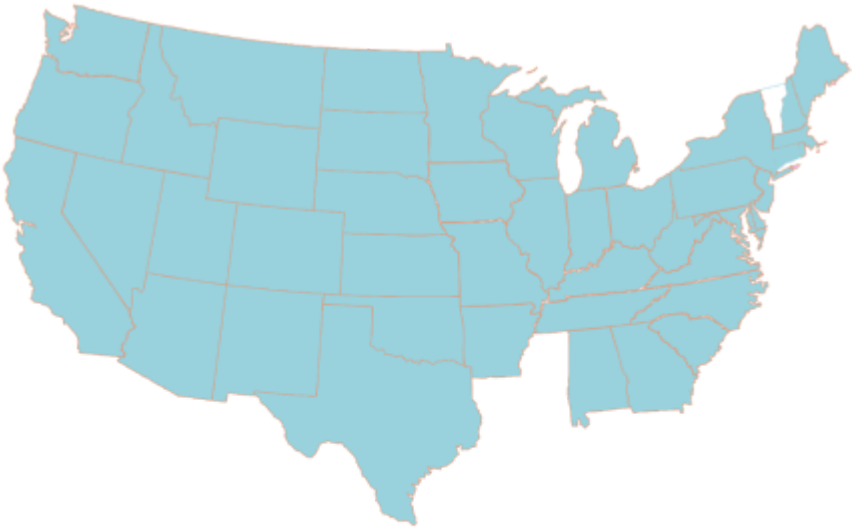
Ingredients:

- 4 tbsps olive oil
- 2 tbsps of red wine vinegar
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 cup of young cattail shoots, chopped
- 1 cup yellow onion, diced
- 1 cup of black olives
- 1 cup of chopped Focaccia
- 1/2 cup of crumbled feta cheese
- ¼ cup of chopped basil
- salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Whisk oil, vinegar, garlic, and salt and pepper into a dressing
2. Place the remaining ingredients into a bowl
3. Toss dressing into the salad
4. Serve chilled

Hops



HOPS

This is one of the most expensive foods in the world. People pay up to $500 per pound for young hopshoots. And you're going to get some for free! You can find wild hops in all the lower 48 states except Louisiana, Mississippi, and Florida.

Hops grow like a vine, up to 25 feet long. You will notice that it twirls around itself. There will be a sturdier stem in the middle with smaller tendrils growing up and around the middle stem. That's called a bine, and it's an excellent way to tell you're looking at hops. The leaves have widely serrated edges and three to five lobes. They kind of look like grape leaves. The pendant flowers are another distinctive feature of this plant. They look like green, papery pine cones.

People generally eat the young leaves and shoots. The flowers have a weird texture when eaten. So, people really only use those to flavor beverages like beer. If you like IPA, you'll enjoy the flavor of this plant.

When to Look for it: Look for the flowers while you're out in the fall. Then, you'll know where to look in the spring for the shoots. Or, in spring, find old brown shoots from the year before. There are likely new ones curled up nearby.

When to Harvest it: The middle of spring. Look for plants with fewer than six leaves. You can go back weekly to get more.

Where to Find it: Forest edges. They like full sun and dry conditions.

Lookalikes: Hop hornbeam, which is a close relative. It grows as far west as Texas and Wyoming all the way to the east coast. People eat the seeds, and it makes excellent firewood. Hops and hop hornbeam have similar-looking flowers, but the leaves are more oval with tight sawtooth edges on hornbeam. Hop leaves look like grape leaves with three to five lobes.

How to Harvest it: Shoots of three inches or less are the best. Cut them off as close to the ground as possible. The ones in shadier spots will be more tender. Sun makes them woody. You will need a good bit to eat them as a side dish on their own, so expect to use them as part of a dish instead.

Nutrition Facts: Per cup, 39 calories, has decent levels of vitamins B6, C, E, and other flavonoids.

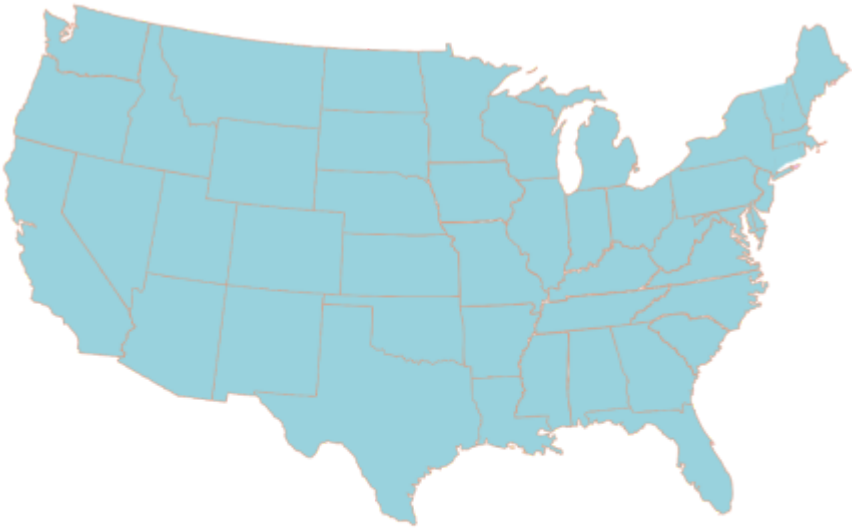
History: The young shoots were sold to be eaten like asparagus in ancient Rome. That's exactly what you want to do too!

Flavors and Textures: Similar in taste and texture to asparagus with a bit of nuttiness.

Recipes and Uses:

- People love them raw
- They are delicate: a quick sauté with butter and garlic
- Hopshoot frittata: hopshoot, leek, and potato in scrambled eggs
- Pickle them with dill, mustard seed, garlic, pepper, or similar wild herbs and spices from this book
- Use as a substitute for asparagus
- Hopshoots and chicken thighs in lemon sauce
- Add them to risottos: hopshoot, peas, and bacon
- Hopshoots and crispy prosciutto tart

Lady's Thumb



LADY'S THUMB

Over 60 different animals enjoy this plant's seeds and nectar. But not many animals eat the leaves because they're peppery. But they are completely edible. They are good raw, like in salads, and cooked like spinach. The shoots are edible too.

This plant grows in all the lower 48, so you shouldn't have any trouble finding it. It also likes to grow in large clumps and is invasive. So, feel free to pick as much as you want. You can get a large harvest of this one.

It only disperses via seeds. So, picking it before it goes to seed is a good idea. But the flavor of the seeds is so tasty that I won't blame you if you want to wait. And the seeds are probably the most exciting part of the plant. They are peppery and make a great spice.

This plant is related to buckwheat and is also called smartweed and redshank. The reason it's called Lady's Thumb is that there's a dark patch on many of the leaves. People say this mark looks like a lady's thumb. The long and narrow leaves are attached to reddish-pink stems that bulb out where the leaf emerges. Its flowers are small and pinkish too. They grow at the end of long flower spikes, which are at the end of its branches. At most, this plant grows up to two feet tall.

When to Look for it: Leaves can be enjoyed from mid-spring through the fall. Flowers bloom for up to two months in the midsummer. The real delicacy, the seeds start to form after that.

When to Harvest it: The three-lobed seed inside should be ready if the flowers are dry and easily rub off.

Where to Find it: Full sun; it will accept some shade. Does not thrive in intense heat. Prefers moist and sandy soil. Near lakes or rivers with sandy banks like in the Great Lakes region.

Lookalikes: Other plants in the smartweed family, such as Pennsylvania Smartweed. They are all edible. You'll know the difference because Lady's thumb has that black smudge on the leaves.

How to Harvest it: You can grab the little buds and stems of the plant, cutting them with some shears. You can then carefully remove the dried flower petals to get to the seeds. You should soak the seeds in water to clean them before you eat them.

Nutrition Facts: Per ounce of seed, about 100 calories. Contains natural fiber, fats, and sugar, along with tannins.

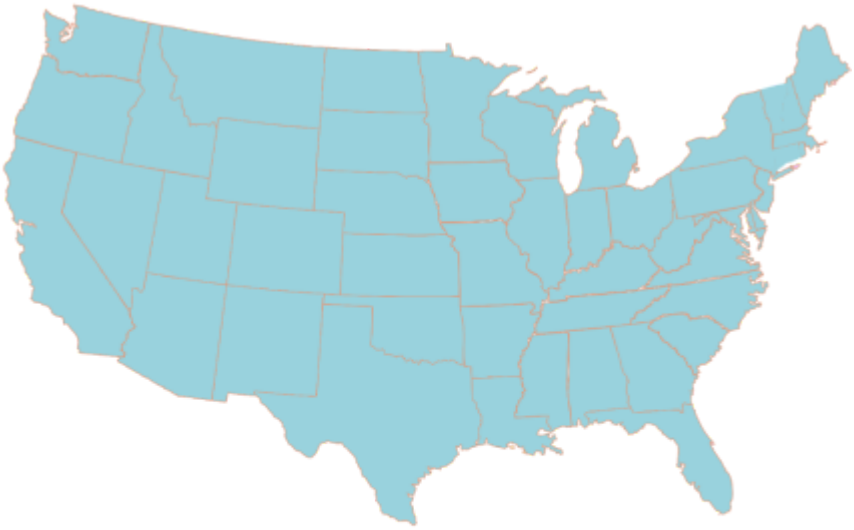
History: Used by Native Americans to help treat stomach pain and poison ivy irritation. They also rubbed it on their horses to repel insects.

Flavors and Textures: Crunchy, zesty, and slightly bitter. People compare the seeds to black pepper.

Recipes and Uses:

- You can steep the seeds to make a spicy tea with honeysuckle, yarrow leaf, wild berries, and honey.
- They are great raw, toasted, or sauteed; use them like a seasoning or spice
- Lady’s Thumb seed drop biscuits with cheddar cheese and scallion
- Cacio e Pepe is a cheesy pasta with pepper, except with Lady’s Thumb seed instead
- Lemon pepper shrimp, again, except with Lady’s Thumb seeds
- Lady’s Thumb pepper-encrusted tuna or beef steaks
- Mashed parsnips or potatoes with Lady’s Thumb pepper

Crabgrass



CRABGRASS

This little plant can produce 150,000 seeds in just one growing season. And it only takes two months for the seeds to mature. That's why getting rid of it in lawns is so hard. After that, it dies back, and the new seed starts the process again.

Some people spend hundreds and sometimes thousands of dollars to get rid of it. They spray. They mow. They dig. But, in Eastern Europe, Africa and India, people cultivate it as a grain and call it fonio. Americans don't grow it because wheat and corn are more profitable, and we don't have the history with the grain here like they do in other places. It's not a part of our culture, but maybe it should be.

Crabgrass blades grow out in a diagonal pattern, like branches, from the center of the plant. People thought this pattern was similar to the way a crab looks. That's how it got its name. Each blade is about the same width across, about the width of a pencil.

Crabgrass can grow up to four feet tall. This might be a surprise to you. Most Americans have probably only seen immature plants or plants that have been mowed back. It produces seed stalks in clusters of three or more that are attached to the main stem underneath. When mature, you will see all the tiny seeds arranged in rows on the spikelet.

When to Look for it: Seeds begin to form starting in midsummer when days start getting shorter.

When to Harvest it: You can gather the seeds from midsummer until the first frost.

Where to Find it: It prefers poor soil and warm and dry conditions.

Lookalikes: Tall fescue. Crabgrass is lighter green in color. Fescue also grows in tight bunches, whereas crabgrass likes to spread with runners.

How to Harvest it: Cut the seed stalks and scrape the seeds from them. You can then pop the seeds over a flame to get rid of the husk or use a mortar and pestle to pound them out. Don't worry about damaging the plant. They will be here longer than we will. Avoid any plants with mold.

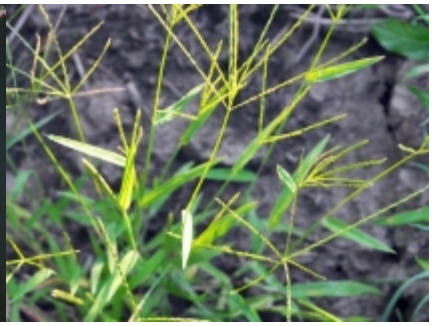
Nutrition Facts: Per ounce, about 120 calories, high in protein, low in carbs and calories, and high in fiber.

History: It was an important food crop in China about 4,500 years ago. It was introduced to the US in 1849 as food for cattle.

Flavors and Textures: Nutty with a fluffy texture like couscous when cooked. It absorbs the flavors around it.

Recipes and Uses:

- You can grind the seeds into flour for baking
- Fonio banana bread
- Ferment the seeds into beer
- Cooking it into a porridge is a very traditional use, maybe with black walnuts and pine nuts
- Use like rice or couscous
- Creamy warm fonio salad with wild asparagus, lamb's quarters, and morels
- Moroccan fonio and lentil stew with lamb



RECIPE: WILD FONIO PILAF

This basic pilaf recipe can be used as a foundation to jump off into so many flavors. It is fast enough to be a weeknight dish but flavorful enough to wow. Add your favorite protein to make this a meal.

I hope you've noticed how gathering wild foods builds on each other. Think about all the different wild flavors we've discussed that would be tasty here: Lady's Thumb pepper, pine nuts, black walnuts, yarrow, and many of the other leaves we've discussed. You could even add stewed wild plums in here.

This was how people fed themselves before grocery stores. They weren't necessarily eating just to survive. They had access to good flavors and could make dishes that we would enjoy today.

Prep time: 5 min

Cook time: 20 min

Ingredients:

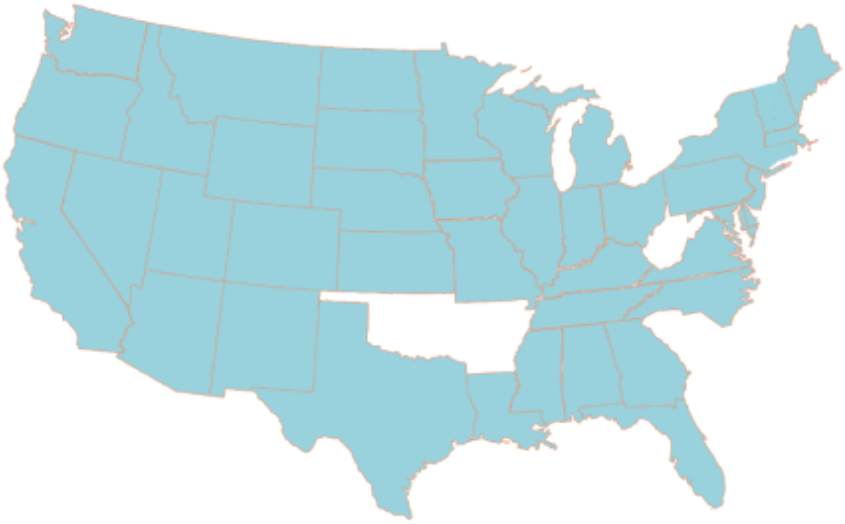
- 2 cups of chicken stock, divided
- ¼ cup of raisins
- 2 tablespoons of peanut oil
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced
- ¼ yellow onion
- 1 cup of fonio grains
- ¼ cup of pomegranate seeds

- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. In a large pot, cook onions and garlic in oil for 5 minutes, until soft and beginning to caramelize
2. Add raisins and broth to the pot and bring to a boil for 10 minutes
3. When raisins are soft, 5 minutes, add the fonio
4. Cook until the fonio is fluffy like couscous, 5 minutes
5. Stir and season with salt and pepper
6. Top with parsley and pomegranate before serving
7. Serve warm

Common Millet



COMMON MILLET

It's an ancient grain, one of the oldest humans have used for food. It's gluten-free and easily digestible. It's tasty. It's easy to harvest and thresh. It's drought and heat tolerant. And you can cook it quickly. Given all this, it's curious why millet is mainly used here as cattle food.

Common Millet or Proso Millet is a grass, like crabgrass. So, what you'll be looking to harvest here are the seeds. The birds will be looking for them too. So, get there early. Birds disperse some of the seed as they eat it or carry it around. They are part of the reason Millet grows far and wide in the US.

It's a staple crop in many countries, especially in India. There, people eat it as a grain and ground it into flour to make bread and other baked goods. Millet grows up to six feet tall and has long light green stalks. The seed heads look somewhat like a long broom and hang down under the weight of the seeds.

When to Look for it: It matures fast, under 90 days after planting. It's possible to find some plants that germinated early, so the seed matured early. But most of the grain will be ready by the fall.

When to Harvest it: When the seed head droops down and the top of the seedhead is brown, the grain is ready. Harvesting about 2/3 of the seedhead is your goal. If you wait until the whole seed head is brown, some birds will likely get the seed first.

Where to Find it: It likes rich soil and a fair amount of water, although it will tolerate drier areas too. Look for it as an interloper in or nearby fields and around field edges.

Lookalikes: Pearl millet and Foxtail millet, both of which are edible. If you see a grey seed coat, it's likely Common Millet.

How to Harvest it: Cut the seedhead off the plant with a knife. You can rub the grains off the seed head by hand. Another method is to put the seed heads into a pillowcase and beat them against the floor to remove the seeds. Hand threshing is easier for small harvests.

Nutrition Facts: A cup is only 207 calories, 41 grams of carbs, 2 grams of fiber, and is very low in sugar. A natural starch.

History: It was first cultivated 10,000 years ago in northern China. It was one of the first grains humans planted. Russian and German immigrants brought it to the US in 1875 to use as a crop.

Flavors and Textures: Nutty, sort of like corn, but sweeter.

Recipes and Uses:

- Grind into flour for baking gluten-free flatbread or sandwich bread
- Make an ancient grains bowl with millet, Kamut, farro, buckwheat, barley, and quinoa with your favorite wild leaves or kale and cabbage, carrots, boiled sweet potatoes, and your favorite dressing
- Good in porridge with wild berries and maple syrup or honey; fermented millet porridge is a classic
- Sparkling millet lemonade: Take the water from the fermented millet porridge, add lemon juice, sparkling water, and a sweetener, and drink as a refreshing tonic
- Any of the recipes for fonio above would be tasty with millet too
- Make a stuffing with mushrooms and asparagus and other nuts and grains
- Put the stuffing in a hollowed-out tomato, pepper, or squash, or add stock to use as a side dish with fowl

CHAPTER 6

ROOTS AND TUBERS

Mashed celery root is one of my favorite dishes. It's got all the good stuff: butter, cream, pepper. But the herbaceousness of celery is built in. So, the layers of flavor in mashed celery root are off the charts, in my humble opinion. That's the kind of experience I have whenever I eat wild root dishes. I always think –and sometimes say—they are so much better than ordinary old potatoes!

I'm not knocking wild potatoes here or potatoes in general. They are tasty too. I'm just saying that there's so much to love about wild roots. First, these are the foods most likely to still be available in early winter before the ground freezes. You may also be able to gather some in early spring before the first shoots are available.

Secondly, they have long shelf lives.

Roots will nourish you through the long, cold winter.

The ones you gathered in the fall or winter can sometimes keep for months in a cool basement or root cellar. They also often keep well in the freezer.

They're starchy, which means carbohydrates. On average, roots are 60% to 90% carbs. So, they are a good source of body fuel and an excellent way to bulk up your meals with nutrients, calories, and flavor.

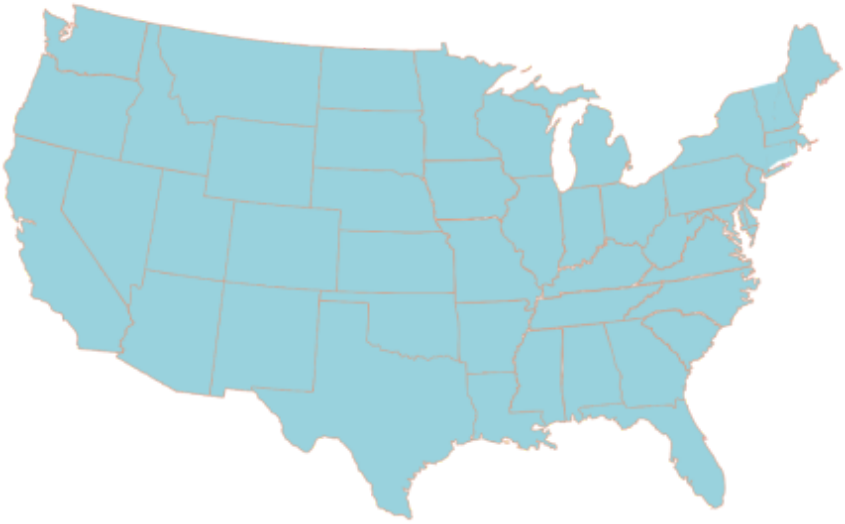
But wild roots have their detractors too. Some think it's too much work to go digging in the ground. Leaves and fruit are much easier to harvest. Some believe that it's too dangerous, that you might run into something toxic. But I say, don't let that stop you.

As for digging, an inexpensive tool can help there. It doesn't have to be heavy. Get a garden shovel made of aluminum or even hard plastic. That should be enough to get the job done. If it's not, don't bother with that plant. There are so many good ones out there to take home with you. Also, roots are so filling that you don't need to take many to make a hearty dish.

You have to look out for toxic plants no matter which kind of food you forage: leaves, fruit, or nuts. It's always a good idea to be on guard to ensure you pick only the good-for-you varieties. If you learn about roots, they won't be any more dangerous for you than another kind of wild food.

Now that I've gotten that out of the way, are you ready to learn about these seven tasty roots? Let's get into them.

Common Chicory



COMMON CHICORY

Chicory is related to Dandelion and endive, both of which are known for their bitterness. It may not be a flavor most Americans gravitate to, except in beer. But, when balanced with salty, sweet, or sour flavors, bitterness can be super tasty. That's my suggestion for using this plant.

Mix chicory with flavors like orange, salted preserved lemons, or a honey vinaigrette. Oily and fatty things are also great with chicory, like olive oil or prosciutto. There are so many options to make use of chicory. Of course, if you prefer less bitterness, you can just cook it.

People roast the root to make a coffee substitute or use it as a fiber supplement. Or you can cook it and eat it like a carrot or parsnip. Once cooked, much of the bitterness goes away.

A mature chicory plant can grow up to five feet tall. They have tall stalks surrounded by leaves that are topped with flowers. The bluish-purple flowers appear in the late summer and last through the fall. They close in the afternoons and on hot days. When young, the leaves are oval-shaped. When mature, the leaves have a saw-tooth shape like a dandelion leaf.

You can find chicory in all the lower 48 states.

When to Look for it: Spring is when you'll find the most tender and least bitter leaves. Harvest roots in the fall.

When to Harvest it: Just before the first autumn frost.

Where to Find it: Chicory likes sunny areas but is not picky about soil type.

Lookalikes: Common Dandelion, but you can eat this plant too. Dandelion flowers are yellow, while chicory's are purple.

How to Harvest it: You can pull most roots from the ground by hand. If not, use a hand shovel. Separate the roots from the leaves.

Nutrition Facts: Per ¼ cup, 43 calories, 10 grams of carbs, less than 1 gram of fat, and 1 gram of fiber. A good source of vitamin B6, manganese, and folate.

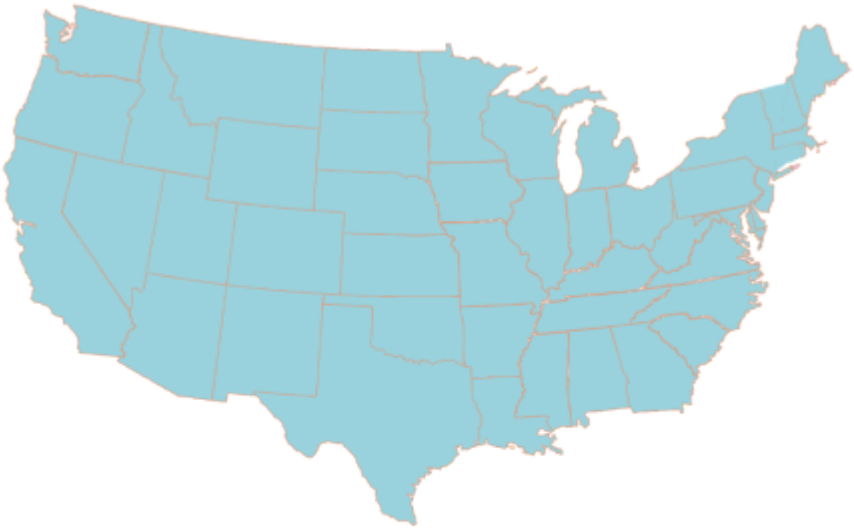
History: The ancient Egyptians grew chicory for its root. The Romans used the sprouts to make a salad with anchovies, garlic, and vinegar. Starting in the 19th century, the French began adding the roasted root to coffee. This tradition was imported the New Orleans, where chicory coffee and beignets are staple snacks.

Flavors and Textures: Known for its bitter taste. Cooking changes the flavor to toasty and nutty. If roasted, they can even be somewhat sweet, like carrots.

Recipes and Uses:

- Bake the chopped chicory root until it’s golden brown to make a chicory root coffee substitute
- Boiled and mashed with butter, cream, and pepper to enjoy like mashed potatoes
- Use as a substitute for mashed potatoes
- Used mashed chicory root to top a shepherd's pie
- Make chicory pancakes like potato pancakes
- Make the mashed root into dumplings for chicken and dumplings
- Roasted, mixed with other roots in butter and herbs

Common Burdock



COMMON BURDOCK

Burdock is one of the first plants to start growing each year. You might even notice young sprouts in the snow if you get snow where you live. They grow pretty fast too. So, it's a plant you can rely on for food when there's little else around.

When mature, it can get up to 10 feet tall. Its leaves are big, heart-shaped, and floppy, supported by a greenish-pink stem. It's also known for its purple spiky seed heads that stick to anything they touch, including you. That's how the seeds get dispersed. So, you'll see this plant along the paths people and animals take. You'll also see this plant on roadsides.

The leaves, stalks, and shoots of burdock are edible. But in my opinion, the root is the star of this plant. It can grow up to three feet long! But there's a balance between tenderness and size here. The bigger it is, the tougher it is. The large roots are also harder to get out of the ground.

When to Look for it: Harvest leaves in early spring. Harvest the flower stalk in spring before the inside goes hollow. Harvest roots in the fall through the spring.

When to Harvest it: Harvest the root in the fall of its first year or spring of the following year. Roots from plants with flower stalks won't be as fleshy.

Where to Find it: It prefers moist soil. Look for it along human or animal paths.

Lookalikes: Rhubarb, which is also edible. Rhubarb stems are deep red in color, while burdock is just slightly pink.

How to Harvest it: Use your garden shovel to remove the soil around the root. Then, you can wiggle the root out of its hole.

Nutrition Facts: Per cup: 85 calories, 4 grams of sugar, 5 grams of fiber, 63 mg of calcium, 17 grams of carbs, 2 grams of protein, and less than 1 gram of fat!

History: This was the inspiration for Velcro fasteners. Native to north Asia and Europe. It was introduced to the US by coincidence. The Micmac and Menominee tribes used burdock as medicine to help heal sores.

Flavors and Textures: Sweet and crunchy, similar to an artichoke.

Recipes and Uses:

- Roasting is classic: you don't even have to peel them; just remove the bad parts
- Great as a pickle; you can use the burdock-flavored vinegar, too, after all the pickles are gone
- Great with pork
- Soup: cubed burdock root and pork shoulder with kale in steaming pork broth
- Slice them thinly and fry for a crunchy snack
- Used in Chinese, Korean and Japanese food
- Stir fry chopped burdock with beef, vinegar, soy sauce, and green onion for garnish

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RECIPE: KINPIRA GOBO

This is a Japanese side dish that uses burdock root. It's a stir-fry with a savory sauce. The chili is optional.

Prep time: 10 minutes

Cook time: 10 minutes

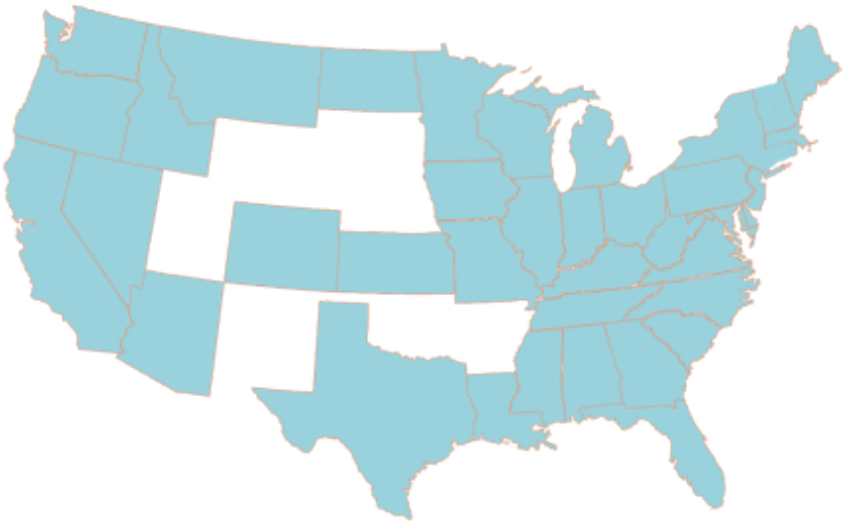
Ingredients:

- 1 large burdock root
- 1 chili pepper, dried
- 1 large carrot
- 1 tbsp of sake
- 1 tbsp of sesame oil
- 1 tbsp of brown sugar
- 2 tbsps of soy sauce
- 1 tbsp of mirin
- 1 tbsp of sesame seeds

Directions:

1. Peel the burdock root and carrots with a knife or potato peeler
2. Julienne the roots
3. Stir fry the burdock in oil until it softens a bit, 3 mins
4. Add the carrots and continue cooking, 3 mins
5. Add chili and seasonings
6. Cook with remaining liquid until dry
7. Garnish with sesame seeds
8. Serve warm

Wild Radish



WILD RADISH

It's fall, and you're coming down with your last cold of the year. Your head is congested, and your throat is sore. That's a great time to enjoy some wild radish root. It will help clear your sinuses, soothe your throat, and help your breathing. It's tasty when you're well too. But you can get double the benefit from it when needed.

Wild Radish grows everywhere except in a few plains states, Utah and New Mexico. It thrives in soil where it's alone. It doesn't like dry areas, deserts, or mountainous areas. It's not uncommon to see clusters of these flowers blowing in the wind along field edges or roadsides.

Much of this plant is edible. Foragers harvest the flowers, pods or fruit, leaves, and roots. It's a great plant for fresh salads, especially the pods. They are a bit peppery and crispy and are an underappreciated part of this plant, in my opinion.

But the root is the most versatile part of the plant. You can enjoy it fresh in a salad, roast it like a carrot, or make pickles out of it. That's why I chose to put this plant in the roots chapter. Plus, it's not native. It's actually an aggressive invasive. So, you don't have to feel bad about pulling the whole plant out by the roots.

You can typically find this by looking for the little white flowers with four petals. They cluster on the end of the branches. The leaves have lobes and fan out from the central stem. If you rub them, they smell turnipy. The lower leaves are a bit furry. At most, it grows to four feet tall.

When to Look for it: Available all year round. Blooms and leaves are available in the spring. Pods form in late summer and early autumn. Roots are available in the summer and autumn.

When to harvest it: Move the top layer of soil away from the plant. If the top is larger than 1" in diameter, you can harvest it.

Where to Find it: It likes bare ground with depleted soil but has no problem in cultivated fields as well.

Lookalikes: Wild mustard, which also has a bit of a peppery taste to it and is completely edible.

How to Harvest it: You can pull the root out by hand most of the time. If you need to, move some soil away with a garden shovel to help start the process.

Nutrition Facts: Rich in vitamins B, C, potassium, and folic acid. Only 1 calorie with no cholesterol, fat, or protein.

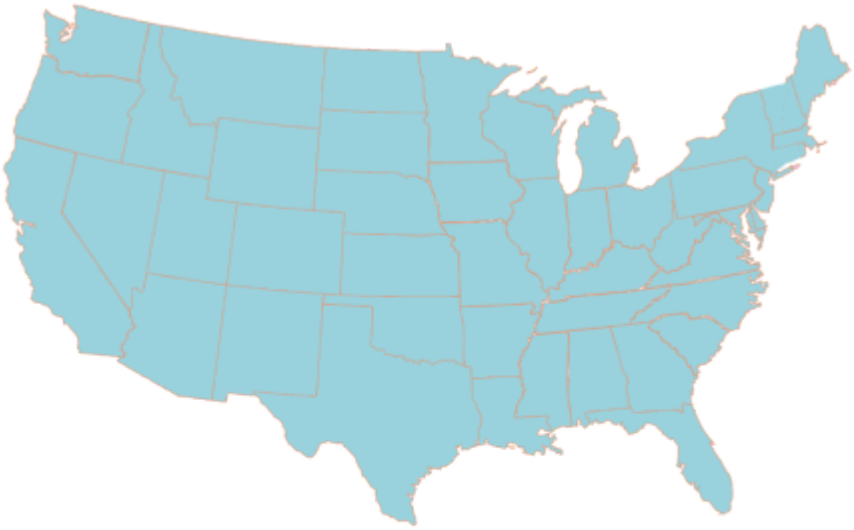
History: It most likely originated in Southeast Asia. It's been a popular food in Asia and the Middle East for centuries. They probably came to the US in the 16th century. They were cultivated in Massachusetts as early as 1629.

Flavors and Textures: Earthy and peppery taste, similar to commercial radishes.

Recipes and Uses:

- Radish butter on toast is classic; add some tang with sour cream or eat it on sourdough
- Slice thin and bake to make radish chips, and season with your favorite powdered seasoning mix
- Roast them with whole garlic cloves; add balsamic vinegar at the end
- Make pickles
- Add radish pickles to pork/carnitas tacos or serve with other fatty meat dishes
- Radish salad with the leaves and the root, goat cheese, pecans, and a mustard vinaigrette
- A radish slaw of onions, yellow peppers, and chopped parsley with buttermilk dressing

Evening Primrose



EVENING PRIMROSE

Evening Primrose gets its name because it blooms at nighttime. Big, showy, fragrant yellow blossoms open in just a few seconds each night. Hummingbird moths, bees, primrose moths, butterflies, and other winged things visit and spread its pollen around.

It’s prized for its oil, which is pressed out of the seeds. People use it to treat skin conditions, arthritis, bruises, and menopause. But you can also use the leaves, shoots, flowers, and roots. The leaves are excellent as greens. People fry up the flowers, seed pods, and shoots.

The roots are best in the plant's first year before the big flowers show up. The long taproots look like parsnips. And you can treat them similarly. But you can also just peel the roots and eat them raw. Because it’s peppery, some people feel a bit of throat irritation when it’s eaten raw. But cooking will fix that problem if it concerns you.

When to Look for it: The leaves can be eaten in spring. The stems can be used until the beginning of summer. Summer is the time to harvest flowers. The pods are available in late summer. Roots are available from summer through spring if the ground doesn’t freeze where you live.

When to Harvest it: The root will be past its prime if it has a big shoot in the middle. You can move some of the dirt around the plant to see the size of the root. You can harvest small ones, but about 1” or more in diameter is a good size.

Where to Find it: Look in sunny areas with low-quality soil. It is drought tolerant, so don’t just look in damp areas.

Lookalikes: Different primrose variants, such as Northern Evening Primrose, which is also edible.

How to Harvest it: You may be able to pull them by hand. Or use a garden shovel if needed. Chop any roots growing off the side or use a potato peeler or a small knife.

Nutrition Facts: Per ½ cup, about 45 calories, is a good source of omega-6 fatty acids.

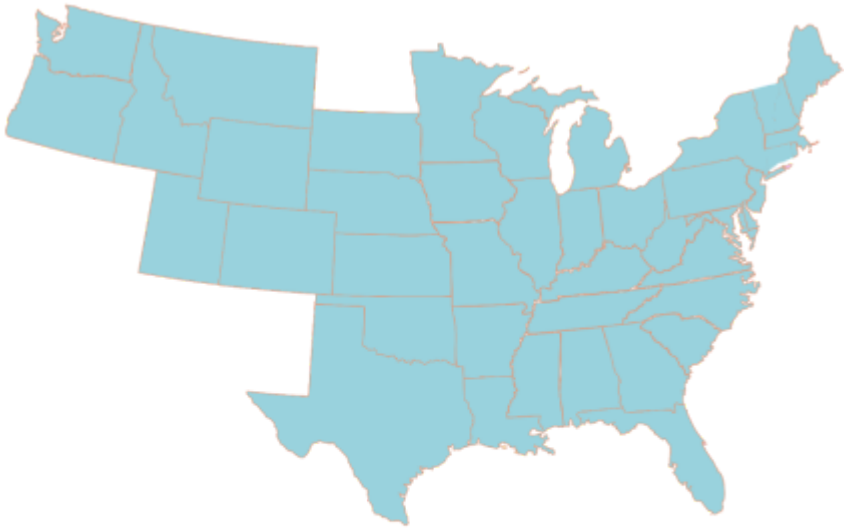
History: The Cherokee made tea from the plant to lose weight. The seeds were taken to England in the 17th century. It then became a crop grown for its roots in England and Germany.

Flavors and Textures: The roots are sweet and spicy.

Recipes and Uses:

- Primrose, apple, ginger soup
- Fry them like fries and serve them with your favorite dip at a party
- Roasted primrose root with chicken
- Primrose ricotta gnocchi from mashed root
- People call it mock horseradish when used raw
- Grate it over your steak, or add to deviled eggs and potato salad
- A spicy slaw of primrose and cabbage

Daylily



DAYLILY

You've probably seen this plant in wedding bouquets and as ornamentals in gardens. They are native to Asia and came to the US as decorative plants. They are considered invasive in many places now. So, don't feel bad about eating them. Humans have been eating daylilies for probably thousands of years. So, you should try them too.

To be clear, I'm not talking about regular old plain lilies. Common lilies are toxic and should be avoided. You also shouldn't bother with commercial daylily hybrids, some of which are also toxic. Unless you know the variety, stick to the wild ones growing near field edges rather than ones in ornamental gardens.

Daylily leaves look like tall grass and bunch up around the plant's flower stem. There are no leaves on the stem with the flower itself. Daylilies have big showy flowers that you can't miss. The most common color is orange. The flowers are edible, as are the young shoots and the roots.

Some people do have tummy problems after eating daylilies. If that's a concern for you, don't eat them raw. Cooked daylilies shouldn't give you any problems at all.

When to Look for it: Harvest the shoots in spring. Harvest flowers in spring and summer. Fresh seed pods are available in late summer. Mature seeds are available in the fall. Get the tubers in autumn through winter and into the following spring if the ground doesn't freeze where you are.

When to Harvest it: Pull the roots before the plant flowers.

Where to Find it: It can grow in any kind of soil and is drought tolerant. You'll find it in full sun.

Lookalikes: Canada lily, wood lily, and the Turk's Cap lily. Daylillies don't have leaves on the flower stem, and the leaves look like big blades of grass. Regular lilies have leaves on the flower stem, and the leaves are almost triangular.

How to Harvest it: Choose a plant without a flower stalk. Dig up the tuber with your hand shovel. If you leave some tubers on the plant, it will grow back.

Nutrition Facts: Per cup, about 90 calories, 43 mg vitamin C, 983 IU vitamin A, 3 grams of protein, 19 mg of vitamin C.

History: Native to Asia. They were brought to Europe in the 16th century. They arrived in the US in the 19th century.

Flavors and Textures: Similar to jicama when raw. Like sweetish potatoes when cooked.

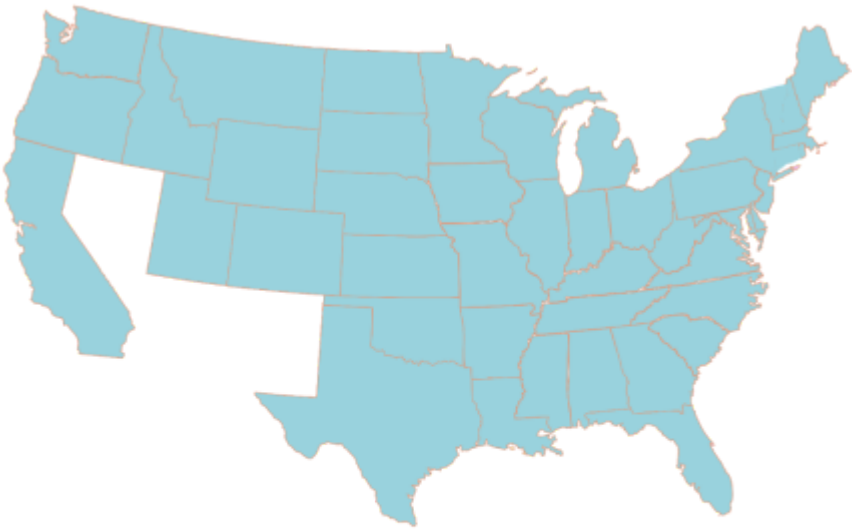
Recipes and Uses:

- Use as a substitute for potatoes
- Confit or oil poach them and serve with duck or your favorite rich meat
- Roast tubers with other root vegetables
- Not potato salad, daylily root salad
- A salad similar to Niçoise, but with these tubers: boiled egg, green beans, capers, olives, etc.
- Peel and eat them as a snack, raw

- Boil and serve in Indian curry with bread to soak up the gravy



Jerusalem Artichoke



JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE

The Jerusalem Artichoke or sunchoke or sunroot or earth apple is quite vigorous. One plant can make up to 6 pounds of tubers. This is how they propagate. If you see one plant, there will be others nearby. So, big harvests are possible with this plant.

You also won't miss this edible out in the wild. This is a native sunflower that can grow up to 12 feet tall. The flowers are bright yellow with at least ten petals. The cheerful-looking flowers grow up to four inches in diameter.

The leaves are oval-shaped and about eight inches long when mature. They feel like sandpaper when you touch them. You can eat them, but the roots are the main highlight of this plant.

Sunchoke roots have tan skin and are about the size of an egg. The insides are white and fleshy. It's a great carb for people with diabetes because it won't cause a spike in blood sugar. And you can enjoy them raw or cooked.

When to Look for it: You can start harvesting when the leaves die and through the winter if the ground doesn't freeze where you live.

When to Harvest it: late fall is best, especially after the first frost has killed the plant. It makes the root sweeter.

Where to Find it: In full sun along the edges of woods or fields.

Lookalikes: Ginger root, but ginger is knobbier.

How to Harvest it: If the plant is huge, top it first, so it's easier to work with. Then, you can dig up the tubers with your garden shovel.

Nutrition Facts: Per cup: 109 calories, 644 mg of potassium, 6 mg sodium, 26 grams of carbs, 2 grams of fiber, and 14 grams of sugar. Also contains a decent

amount of vitamin C and iron.

History: Native Americans cultivated them widely and helped spread them across the country. They also introduced colonists to them in the 1600s.

Flavors and Textures: Crunchy, a bit nutty, and sweet. Some people say the taste is similar to an artichoke. Similar to water chestnuts in texture when raw.

RECIPES AND USES:

- Not scalloped potatoes, scalloped sunroot
- Slice them thin and fry them to make chips; they would be great with plantain dip
- Slice them thin and add to a salad with wild radish and watercress
- Bacalhau a Gomes de Sa: sunchokes with olives, salt cod, boiled egg, and lots of butter
- Salmon chowder with roasted sunchoke
- Roasted sunchokes with steamed green beans, feta, and pine nuts
- Sausage, sunchoke, and kale skillet

RECIPE: SUNCHOKE PICKLES

This should fill two one-liter canning jars.

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: none

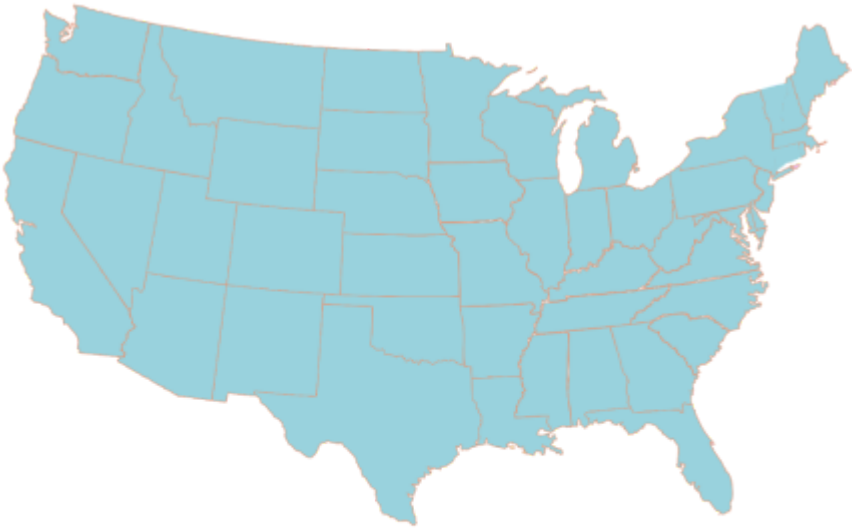
Ingredients:

- 2 pounds sunchokes, sliced
- 3 lemons, juiced
- 4 cups of distilled water
- 3 tbsps of pickling salt
- 2 tbsps of dill
- 2 tbsps of celery seed
- 2 tbsps of peppercorns
- 2 bay leaves

Directions:

1. Slice the sunchokes into ½” rounds
2. Fill your well-washed jars with the sunchokes and one bay leaf each
3. Mix water with lemon juice, vinegar, spices, and salt
4. Add brining liquid to each jar and make sure all the sunchokes are entirely covered
5. Store for at least three weeks in a cool, dry place before using

Queen Anne's Lace



QUEEN ANNE'S LACE

You've probably seen these growing in wild areas or just overgrown fields. These white umbrella flowers look idyllic, blowing in the wind. When I was a kid, I would nibble on them for a quick spicy hit. They are compound flower heads made of up to 1,000 individual blossoms. The center of the cluster is always slightly reddish or violet. The leaves are feathery or fernlike, similar to carrot leaves. And it's covered in tiny hairs.

Typically, I say to avoid a plant with an umbrella flower. That's because some toxic plants also have these large flowerheads. But the differences between the good and bad ones are significant enough that you can probably tell the difference. I felt confident as a kid nibbling them and had no problems. You likely won't, either.

This plant is invasive in the US and is also called wild carrot. It's related to the commercial carrots you buy in stores. The seeds, flowers, stalk, leaves, and roots are all edible. Peel the stalk to use as a vegetable. Many people love to use the seeds as a spice. And the flowers and leaves are a great addition to salads.

When to Look for it: Harvest the flowers and stalks from spring to early fall before they curl into themselves. Harvest the seeds in the fall after they have dried and turned brown. Harvest roots in the fall too.

When to Harvest it: Get roots in the fall of the first year before the flower stalk emerges.

Where to Find it: It likes dry, sunny areas, especially with depleted soil.

Lookalikes: Poison hemlock, which has a hairless stalk. Queen Anne's Lace's stalk will be hairy and has dark flowers in the center of its bloom. Toxic Hogweed is rare and has a smooth reddish stem and no dark flowers in the center of its flower head.

How to Harvest it: You may be able to pull them by hand. If not, use your garden shovel to help loosen them first.

Nutrition Facts: About 25 calories in one large root. 1 gram of protein, 10 grams of carbs, and less than a gram of fat. They're low in most macro elements, including beta-carotene, as they do not have the orange color of a commercial carrot.

History: It was introduced to North America by European settlers as a medicinal herb. From there, it was able to grow wild across the country.

Flavors and Textures: Fresh, a little bit like a carrot. A good parsley substitute.

Recipes and Uses:

- Use as you would carrot
- Peeled and roasted in butter with other wild roots from this chapter
- Wild carrot and ginger soup made from a purée of the root with chicken stock
- Wild carrot cake, muffins, or cookies
- Creamy wild carrot slaw
- Add it diced to pot roast and pot pies
- Wild carrot fries or chips

CHAPTER 7

MUSHROOMS!

People have eaten mushrooms for over 18,000 years.

We humans were still hunter-gathers back then.

When we started farming, mushrooms were still part of our lives. The Aztecs, Chinese, Greeks, Egyptians, Mayans, and Vikings all used them. Sometimes they were food. Other times they were used in religious ceremonies. Either way, mushrooms have been a part of human life for a very long time.

Most of us shy away from gathering mushrooms because we fear the ultimate mistake. But that's very rare. I don't want to suggest that you shouldn't be careful. Don't just read one book to understand the world of mushrooms. Get lots. Talk to people and join groups. But the risk of harming yourself isn't as large as most people fear.

Maybe only one person each year dies from mushroom poisoning. About 40 go to the hospital. Another 200 just rest at home. So, if you make a mistake with a mushroom, it's 200 times more likely you'll just feel bad for a few days. The reason is, just like with foraging other foods, there are some easy ways to protect yourself. And all that information is coming up.

There are so many reasons to try foraging mushrooms. They have lots of fiber. They can lower blood sugar. They're good for your heart

and weight, and immune system. They fight cancer. They're really a super food and a delicious one.

So, what can you do to stay safe? Here are some tips.

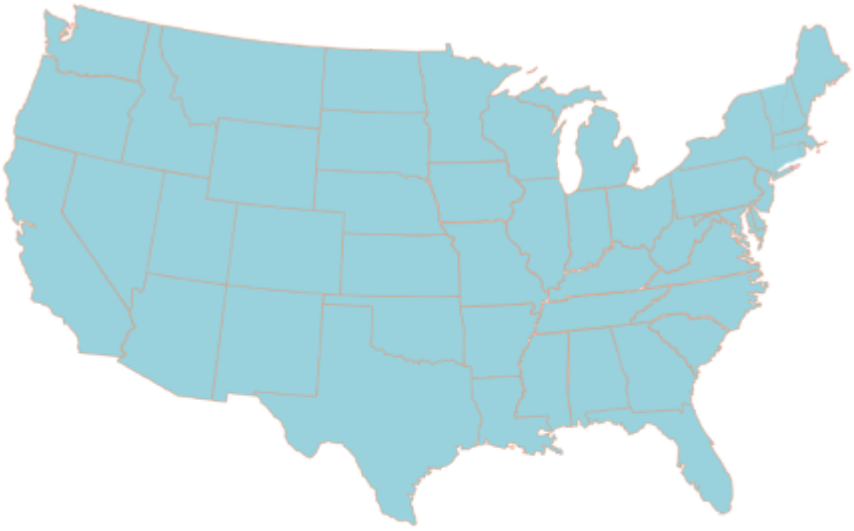
1. Start with a group that can help you identify the edible ones with 100% certainty.
2. Smell it. If it has a harsh or sharp smell, stay away. If it has a pleasant mushroom smell, you can proceed.
3. Is it growing on pine, cedar, eucalyptus, or a poisonous tree? Then, avoid it.
4. If you decide to touch it, use gloves.
5. Is it sitting in a cup? If the mushroom is emerging out of a cup called a volva, avoid it. Sometimes the volva is underground.
6. Does it have a ring around the stem? Then, avoid it.
7. Does it have white gills underneath the cap? Then, avoid it.
8. Is any part of it reddish? Then, avoid it.
9. Can you identify it? You can use the pictures and descriptions below to help or a mushroom guide. If you don't know what it is, avoid it. This includes mushrooms without all their parts, even when you get home. You can only tell what kind it is if you have the whole thing to view. If you find a broken one in your batch, throw the entire batch out to be safe.
10. Never eat a wild mushroom raw, even if you can identify it. Always cook them.
11. Only eat a small piece first. Then, wait a day or two to see how you feel. You might even want someone around while you wait in case of an adverse reaction.

If you cover your bases, you'll have a good time.

The best time to go mushroom hunting is just after a rain. That's when you'll see the most fruiting bodies. If it's been dry, it's unlikely you'll have a good harvest.

Ok, now let's get into the goodies. I cover seven mushrooms in this chapter.

Chanterelle



CHANTERELLE

Suppose you smell apricots in the air while in the forest. It means that there may be chanterelles around. This mushroom can't be grown commercially. You can only harvest them in the wild. It means they're expensive in stores. It also means you may have competition out there.

This trumpet-like mushroom almost looks like a flower and can grow up to five inches in diameter. It has a slight depression in the center. The edges are curled; underneath, you'll find veins or wrinkles rather than gills. The veins will be forked rather than the straight, single lines of true gills. Chanterelles range in color from yellow to gold. You might see a range of these colors in the same patch of mushrooms.

When to Look for it: Late spring to early fall.

When to Harvest it: Harvest after a nice rain; otherwise, when the weather is cool.

Where to Find it: They only grow in temperate, mature forests under trees, growing directly in the ground.

Lookalikes: False chanterelle, which is toxic. It is a dark, almost orange color and is orange inside. True chanterelles are whiter inside. False chanterelles smell like regular mushrooms. Chanterelles smell sweet, like stone fruit. Jack-o-lanterns, which are toxic. They have true gills, not the wrinkles you expect on chanterelles. They also grow on wood, not directly on the ground like chanterelles. Also, if you see a similar mushroom anywhere but a mature forest, avoid it.

How to Harvest: Use a knife to cut it at the base. Don't twist because they usually are hard to pull out, and you might crush the mushroom. Take a big step away to avoid crushing any nearby mycelium that will sprout into new mushrooms. Tear them in the middle and remove any debris with a toothbrush.

Nutrition Facts: One mushroom is just 8 calories, 1 gram of fat, 1 gram of carbs, 1 gram of fiber, and less than a gram of sugar, cholesterol, and sodium.

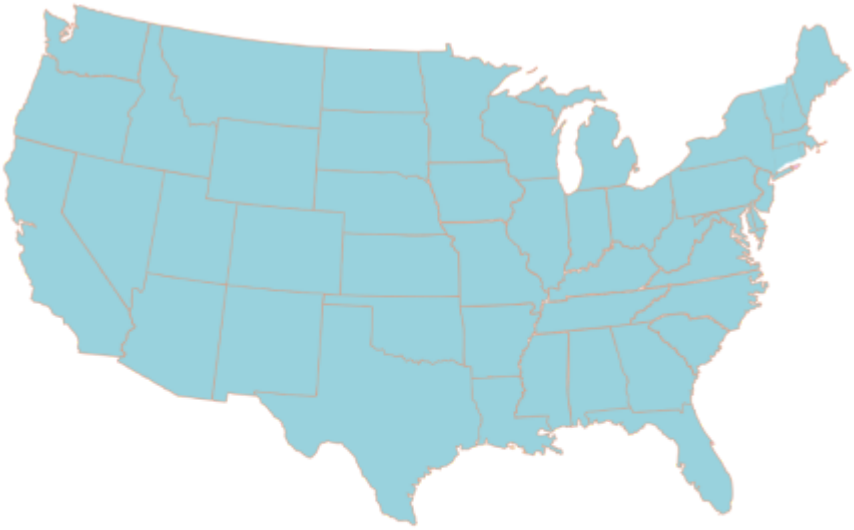
History: Documented in African, European, and Asian history as a tasty ingredient. Many cultures claim to have used Chanterelles for centuries. It is a global food.

Flavors and Textures: They are peppery and smoky. They smell like apricots in the wild.

Recipes and Uses:

- A simple sauté with garlic and olive oil
- Roast chicken with chanterelle gravy
- Pot roast with chanterelles
- Great as a side to venison or rabbit
- Chanterelle quiche
- Dehydrate them and powder them as a flavoring for soups and broths
- Creamy mushroom gravy to pour over potatoes or a hamburger steak

Black Trumpet



BLACK TRUMPET

This is an excellent mushroom for beginning foragers. It tastes good. It's relatively abundant. And it has no toxic lookalikes.

A black trumpet looks like a chanterelle. In fact, some people call them black chanterelles. Instead of being golden, they have a deep, black, gray, or brown color. Because of their color, they often blend into the dead leaves and other decaying matter on the forest floor. So, you really have to be on the lookout to see them. You may smell them before you see them. Use as many senses as you need to spot them.

They're shaped like a funnel with edges that roll down. You won't find gills on these. They have veins underneath their rims and grow up to six inches tall.

When to Look for it: After a rain, or near some water sources.

When to Harvest it: Mid-summer through the end of fall.

Where to Find it: In a dark area of a hardwood forest, especially if there's moss nearby. They don't grow on wood, but they'll grow next to it. They especially like Oak and Beech.

Lookalikes: No toxic lookalikes. Devil's Urn, which isn't poisonous. Also, Entoloma Subcarneum, which isn't poisonous.

How to Harvest it: You can pick them up by hand or cut them at the base with scissors or a knife. Leave the dirty bases behind.

Nutrition facts: Per ½ cup, they have 20 calories, 5 grams of carbs, less than a gram of protein, 5 grams of fiber, and 2 mg of sodium.

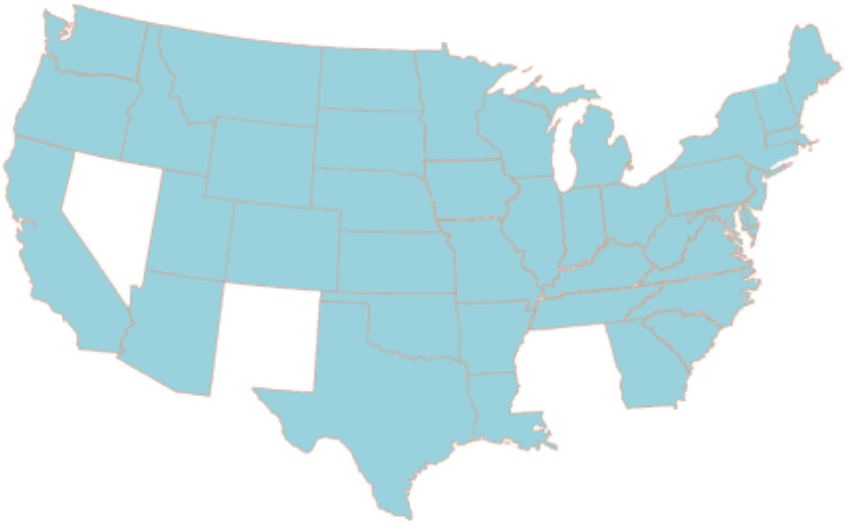
History: It may be a myth, but people say they are called black trumpets because they look like a trumpet that dead people are playing underground. Frequently used in American cooking in the 1800s.

Flavors and Textures: Nutty, deep, and almost smoky. They will turn other foods black or grey. So, you may want to cook these separately.

Recipes and Uses:

- Great with cream: homemade cream of mushroom soup
- Black Trumpets and peas in alfredo pasta
- Black trumpet and wild asparagus risotto
- Watercress and black trumpet pizza
- Marinated black trumpet kebabs
- Black trumpet and leek stuffed hand pies
- Great with eggs: black trumpet omelet

Morel



MOREL

Morel's are another mushroom that only grows in the wild. And their price in stores reflects that. Perhaps, their price is why there's a robust morel hunting community; people are looking for opportunities to get them for cheap. If you want to be a part of the community, start with the Great Morel Information Exchange Facebook Group. It's 13,000-strong and a great place to get started.

Morels grow in almost every state except in the deep south, New Mexico, and Nevada, but not evenly. They get sparse on the west side of the plains states until you get to the West coast. But that's what you'd expect from a fungus that prefers hardwood forests. There has to be sufficient rain and rich soil to support large trees. Otherwise, morels won't thrive.

That said, it's worth getting out there pretty much no matter where you live. This is one of those foods that's worth a longer foraging trip. The website thegreatmorel.com keeps track of sightings across the country. It's a great resource to help you locate your first haul.

Morels are tiny but mighty. They are small –at most, four inches in height—but full of flavor. Their most distinguishing feature is their cap with its honeycomb pattern. The stem is smooth, and inside they are hollow.

When to Look for it: They show up in mid-spring in warmer areas. In cooler places, start to look for them in late spring. April and May are the best months.

When to Harvest it: Usually, you should pick them when you see them. They don't last long. If you catch them early, you may be able to get a second harvest in two weeks.

Where to Find it: In hardwood forests around the bases of ash, aspen, elm, and oak trees, especially dead or dying ones.

Lookalikes: The false morel. Some people eat them. Others have had stomach issues with them. A false morel will have a cap with predominantly vertical folds. If it's a true morel, it will have both vertical and horizontal folds on the cap. If you cut it, you'll notice that the cap of a false morel is only attached at the top.

How to Harvest it: Cut at the stem base with a knife, leaving the base in the ground. The next time you buy a bag of onions or potatoes, save the bag to use

while harvesting morels. You can also buy a mesh bag. You want a bag that breathes while harvesting these.

Nutrition Facts: For a 2-ounce serving: 20 calories, .4 grams of fat, 2 grams of protein, and 3 grams of carbs. They also contain 2 grams of dietary fiber and no saturated fat. They're very high in copper, potassium, and some vitamins, including vitamin D.

History: It was first cataloged by Europeans in 1753 by mycologist Carl Linnaeus. Their name comes from the French word "maurus," which means brown.

Flavors and Textures: Woody and nutty, like the loamy earth where you harvest them.

Recipes and Uses:

- Start with a quick sauté in butter to enjoy their earthy flavor
- With eggs: morels, red onion, and tarragon in a quiche
- Cream and dairy: Morels and peas in Fettucine with brown butter sauce
- Morel and goat cheese stuffed meatballs
- Morel and mozzarella panini
- Crispy skin chicken thigh in morel sauce
- Stuff the caps with your favorite flavors: crab, cheese, and bacon would all be delicious

RECIPE: MOREL SAUCE

Especially good on bison, venison, quail, duck, goose, boar, or squirrel. But it will also add flavor to beef, pork, and hearty fish like cod or halibut.

Prep time: 30 min

Cook time: 20 min

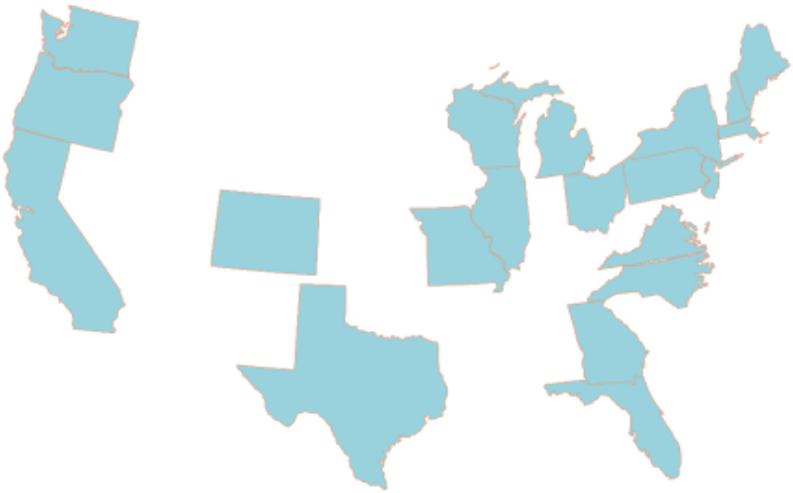
Ingredients:

- 4 tbsps of butter, unsalted
- 1 tbsp of shallot, minced
- 2 tablespoons of flour
- 1 cup of fresh morels, minced
- 1 cup of beef or venison stock
- ½ cup of port
- 1 sprig of fresh thyme
- salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Mix melted butter with the flour and cook on low heat until a paste or roux forms
2. In another pot, heat the stock until steaming
3. Add morels and thyme to stock and simmer on low heat to infuse morel flavor
4. Remove the morels, add port, bring to a boil, and reduce your stock by half
5. Combine the roux into the reduced stock to thicken
6. In another skillet, sauté shallots in remaining butter until soft, 5 minutes
7. Combine sauté, reduced stock, and morels to make a finished sauce
8. Serve warm over your favorite game meat

Hedgehog



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HEDGEHOG

This mushroom is also known as Sweet Tooth because of the tendrils underneath its cap. People sometimes call them fringes. But to me, they look like the back of a hedgehog. In reality, they are the gills. Because of this distinctive feature, it's easy to identify and an excellent mushroom to hunt as a beginner.

Each fruit will have one or two orange-cream caps with waved edges. The fruit tends to grow in clusters. So, if you find one, there are likely others nearby. You can eat the entire thing, including the stem and spines.

If you're in a suitable habitat, you will likely find some of these mushrooms around. Once you find a few, you can keep going back yearly to gather more. They have a pretty wide range. But you're unlikely to see them in dry and desert areas, much of the deep south, and the intermountain west.

When to Look for it: East of the Rockies, they show up from mid-summer to fall. In the west, they fruit in winter.

When to Harvest it: As young as you can find them.

Where to Find it: They prefer cool and damp places in forests, especially by streams and rivers. You'll see them popping out of dead leaves and moss. The best trees to look under are oak, chestnuts, and beech.

Lookalikes: No dangerous lookalikes, but it is confused with the Hydnum Albidum and the Hydnum Albomagnium. Both are also called hedgehog mushrooms. But they are whiter in color than the mushrooms we're talking about here.

How to Harvest it: You can use a knife or scissors to cut it at the base. Don't get too close to the ground to avoid dirt. A cleaner mushroom in the forest will mean less cleaning at home. Don't pick all the mushrooms in the stand. Leave the largest and the smallest to help the stand survive.

Nutrition Facts: Per cup, they have 945% copper, 1105% manganese, 292% iron, 65% magnesium, 60% calcium, and 60% of the zinc you need in a day, all with just 58 calories, 5 grams of fat, 4 grams of carbs, and 2 grams of protein.

History: The first European to describe it was Carl Linnaeus in 1753 in his book Species Plantarum.

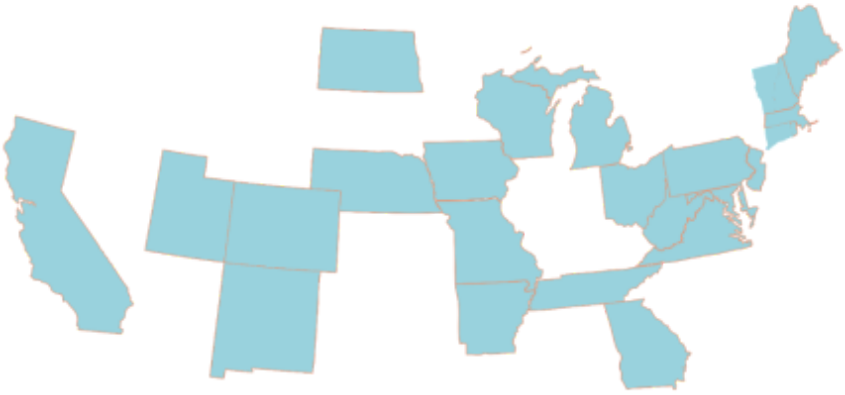
Flavors and Textures: It smells sweet, fruity, earthy, and nutty. Maybe a spicy hit at the end. A more intense flavor than chanterelles. Its texture is a bit chewy after cooking.

Recipes and Uses:

- Use as an alternative to chanterelles in any of the recipes from that section
- Grilled hedgehog mushroom meatballs are especially good if you have some older mushrooms that are past their prime
- Use them to bulk up the flavor and heft of porridges or stews
- Rice porridge made with chicken broth topped with sliced hedgehogs and green onions
- Use as a meat substitute or filler
- Hedgehog mushroom shepherd’s pie
- Mushroom wellington




Oyster



OYSTER

These are common ingredients in many Asian dishes. But they are pretty versatile. Use them whole or chopped, fried or sauteed in a bit of butter and garlic. They are really a cooking mushroom, though. Some people say they taste a bit like metal when raw. So, leave the salads to the white button mushrooms.

These can be cultivated commercially. So, they are cheaper than morels. But, because they're more flavorful, they're more expensive than a button mushroom. That said, you're still getting a bargain here if you run across some in the wild.

It's not uncommon to find a cluster of brownish-white oyster mushrooms growing together. They have crescent or half circle-shaped caps that bend around the tree where they're growing. The edges may look ruffled on some of them. And the caps range from gray to tan to off-white.

When to Look for it: Starting in spring and through fall.

When to Harvest it: When the caps begin to concave or turn upwards, they're ready to be harvested.

Where to Find it: They love deciduous forests. They're often found on trees when they start to decay or on rotting logs. They tend to grow in bouquets. So, if you see one, there are likely others close.

Lookalikes: The poisonous Jack-o-lantern. These grow on trees like Oysters, but they will be orange or slightly green. The color range of an oyster mushroom varies from tan to off-white. They'll never be greenish or orangish.

How to harvest it: You can cut them with a knife, or if they're small enough, pick them by hand. Cut above any dirty parts. If you can, wipe the debris off with a wet towel. Don't soak them.

Nutrition Facts: Per cup, it contains 28 calories, 5 grams carbs, 3 grams protein, less than a gram of fat, 2 grams fiber, 27% DV niacin, 22% DV pantothenic acid, and 8% DV of folate, potassium, choline, and phosphorus.

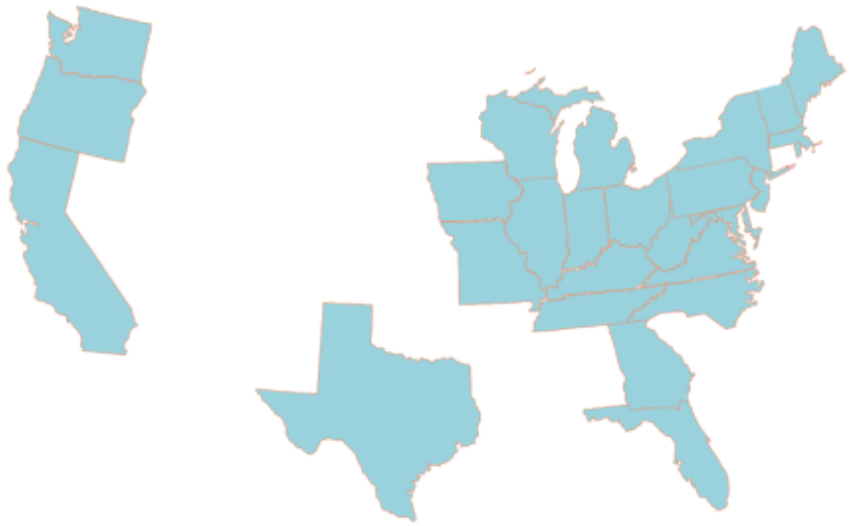
History: It was first cultivated in 1917 in Germany as a subsistence food during World War I.

Flavors and Textures: A subtle taste of seafood and sometimes a bit like anise.

Recipes and Uses:

- Quick sauté with butter, garlic, Lady's Thumb pepper, and yarrow leaf
- Asian-inspired dishes
- Oyster mushrooms sauteed with cabbage and Chinese egg noodles in oyster sauce
- Tom Kha soup: coconut milk and chicken broth with oyster mushrooms and other veggies of your choice
- Oyster mushroom stroganoff
- Some people consider fried oyster mushrooms to be "vegan fried chicken"
- Good baked in risotto or mixed into creamy polenta

Chicken of the Woods



CHICKEN OF THE WOODS

With its beautiful bright colors and easy identification, this is an excellent mushroom for beginning foragers. It's also called sulfur shelf, chicken mushroom, or chicken fungus. Do you know what kind of dishes this mushroom could make taste good?

Look for it on tree trunks or logs in the forest. Occasionally, this mushroom grows out of the ground because it's attached to a root or something underground.

It has a semicircular cap usually wrapped tightly around the tree where it's growing. Because it's wrapped tightly around the tree, most won't have a noticeable stem. The caps are orange or pink on top and white underneath. They like to grow in layers, either right next to each other or above and below each other.

They can be quite large, more than a foot across. So, you can get a big harvest if you're making a dish for a crowd. If you're going for quality over quantity, select the youngest mushrooms since they will be the most tender. Once you find a good patch, you can return for up to ten years to enjoy them fresh.

When to Look for it: Typically, available from mid-spring to mid-fall in most places, but it can be as early as May and then as late as December in some cases.

When to Harvest it: The balance is between tenderness and size. You can harvest the youngest. But then you have to wait another year. Maybe select the fruiting bodies in the medium range, let the young ones mature for a week, and then return.

Where to Find it: Look for it on hardwood trees that are dead and dying, especially cherry, beech, and oak.

Lookalikes: There are no close lookalikes. But the Jack-o-lantern mushroom is one to consider. Chicken of the woods does not have gills under the cap like the Jack.

How to Harvest it: You can cut them using a paring knife or a mushroom knife.

Nutrition Facts: Per half cup, 36 calories, 6 grams carbs, 21 grams protein, 2 grams fat, 150 mg potassium, 10% RDI vitamin C, 5% RDI vitamin A.

History: Used as a food source by the Kashaya Pomo along the Sonoma Coast in California. It has also grown wild in the eastern US since ancient times. In Russia, they use it as an antibiotic. In some parts of Europe, it is dried and added to bread flour.

Flavors and Textures: Lemony, tasting almost like lobster, crab, or oyster! But most often, people think it tastes like chicken.

Recipes and Uses:

- People especially love them chicken fried, or breaded in seasoned flour and pan-fried
- Fried chicken of the woods Po' Boy
- A simple sauté in garlic and butter to give some chew to your favorite pasta
- They are great as pickles
- Pickled chicken of the woods on toast with kale, goat cheese, and a poached egg
- Make a chicken of the woods and white bean chili
- Chicken of the woods stir-fry with broccoli and asparagus; add oyster sauce, teriyaki, hoisin, or peanut sauce, whichever sounds good to you




RECIPE: CHICKEN OF THE WOODS TACOS

This is a quick meal you can make in just over 30 minutes. If you want a more flavorful dish, chicken fry the mushrooms or sauté them in lard.

Prep time: 25 minutes

Cook time: 12 minutes

Ingredients:

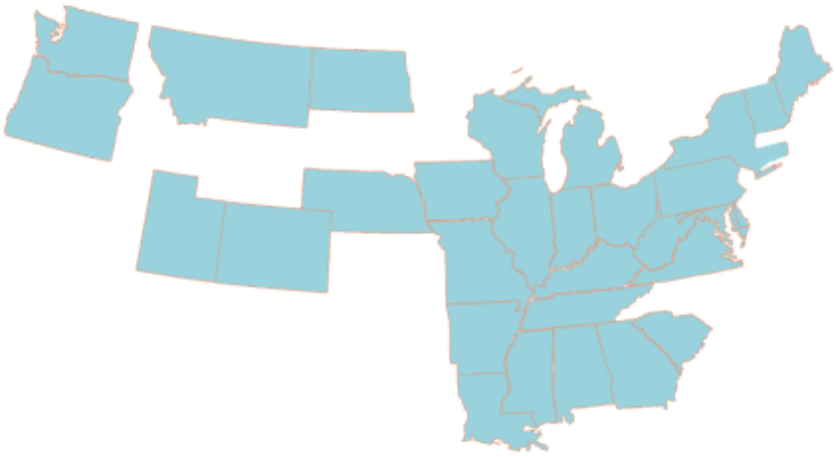
- 6 oz chicken of the woods mushrooms
- 1 tbsp peanut oil
- 1 lime, juiced
- 1 large avocado, sliced
- 1 cup of cabbage, shredded
- ½ cup of cilantro, chopped
- ½ cup of white onion, diced
- 1 cup of green salsa, canned
- 6 flour tortillas

Directions:

1. Tear the mushrooms into bite-sized pieces
2. Sauté the mushrooms in oil until warm and tender, about 8 minutes
3. Place the tortillas in the warm pan to freshen them, 30 seconds on each side

4. Put the taco together with mushrooms, avocado, cabbage
5. Top with onion, cilantro, lime juice, and salsa
6. Serve warm

Puffball



PUFFBALL

You don’t see these for sale much. So, most people are probably not familiar with them. But they are a superb mushroom for beginning foragers because the harvest can be large and easy to identify.

These mushrooms literally look like giant balls! They can be as small as a golf ball or as large as a beach ball. When harvesting, always look at the inside. If they’re brown or green, do not eat them. Those are poisonous. Make sure they’re all white, with no visible caps or gills.

Puffball mushrooms just sit and wait for things to bump into them. When a deer kicks one, spores spew out through a hole in the top of the mushroom. It makes something that looks like a brownish smoke cloud. Large ones can hold up to seven trillion spores.

It’s fun to see the explosion of spores. But be sure you don’t inhale them. They irritate the lungs and can cause fever and vomiting.

When to Look for it: Late summer through the first frost.

When to Harvest it: They should still be white on the outer surface with few, if any, cracks. You want them younger rather than more mature.

Where to Find it: Look for them in fields, meadows, and the floors of deciduous forests growing in leaf matter.

Lookalikes: Destroying Angel and Death Cap. Cut the mushroom through the middle. It should look like a marshmallow inside, solid and bright white. If there’s any coloring or gills, throw it away.

How to Harvest it: You can pull them by hand. Cut them down the middle to ensure they are solid and white throughout. Because they grow in the ground, you

may notice bugs or holes from bugs. You can cut this part off. The rest is still good to eat. Remove the outer skin before using. It's tough.

Nutrition Facts: Per ½ cup, it contains 44 calories, 42 grams of carbs, 10 grams of fat, and 45 grams of protein!

History: Used by many Native American tribes, including the Iroquois, Ojibwe, Omaha, and Miwok. The Blackfoot in the prairie states used dried puffballs as kindling in fires. The Lakota use the spores to slow bleeding and treat infections.

Flavors and Textures: Neutral but mushroomy. Some people describe the texture as like tofu.

Recipes and Uses:

- Bread them to make a parmigiana or schnitzel
- Puffball parmesan sandwich with watercress
- Breaded and fried puffball steak with wild asparagus and home fries
- Create fries with them
- Top your puffball fries with gravy, cheese curds, and diced sausage
- Cook them like tofu
- Stir fry cubes with ground pork, black bean paste, chili oil, and Sichuan peppercorns

PART III
FORAGING HELP

CHAPTER 8

PRESERVING AND STORING YOUR WILD EDIBLES

This chapter probably isn't going to start the way you expect. Yes, this chapter is about preserving the food we worked so hard to harvest. So, we will get into root cellars, canning, freezing, dehydrating, pickling, and more. But people often overlook the most obvious place to store wild edibles. And that's where I want to start this chapter.

Keeping plants in the ground and growing is the best way to store them.

As I mentioned in the foraging rules section, the ground is the best preservation method. There's nothing fresher than just picked. So, leave plants where they are for as long as you can. Pick them as close to the date you will use them as possible.

Trips to foraging sites farther away will probably be less frequent and only for the most special goodies. Instead, you'll probably focus on the foraging spots closest to you, pick what's in season there, and eat that most often.

But let's be honest. You and I both live in the 21st century. You will still shop online, at your local grocery, and at your local farmers' market. Maybe you can even get some things from your own yard. So, relying on foraging spots closest to you won't get monotonous.

Instead, it will maximize flavor for you because you will be eating your wild goodies- and hopefully, everything else- fresher.

Remember, your lawn, your neighbor's lawn, or your community lawn is your closest foraging spot. If you grow an organic lawn, that's even better. It's not hard to do. Just add compost once or twice a year or spray a compost tea once a month. And make sure everything else you put on your lawn is natural.

I admit that organic lawns don't look like green uniform carpets like their chemically dressed neighbors. They will have more "weeds" in them, which is what you actually want. About 50% of these "weeds" will be edible. You will pick them and eat them. The other 50% will become part of the compost you use. It's a win-win.

A WILD EDIBLE GARDEN?

If you aren't a fan of a "natural lawn," maybe you only devote a section of your plot to foraging. Or you can just make a wild edible garden. They are a terrific asset to biodiversity, and pollinators love them. They can also be quite beautiful.

There are places online where you can buy wild edible seeds to start your garden. Wild Pantry and Native Foods Nursery are just two. Or you can check out a seed exchange such as Seed Savers Exchange or the Great American Seed Swap.

Seed saving is also a great option to start your wild edible garden. It's not hard to do. And you don't necessarily have to sacrifice your edible harvest unless you are explicitly harvesting the seeds to eat.

While harvesting, take some of the overripe fruit or nuts or the dried seed heads from the biggest, most virile plant you can find. Ensure all the seeds are dry to the touch and that any flesh has been removed. Next, dry the seeds until they feel hard or crispy. But don't get them too warm. Temperatures above 100 degrees can cook the seeds and kill them.

Put the dry seeds in a labeled container that animals or critters can't access and leave them in a cold place until you need them. The basement is fine. The freezer also works if your seeds are absolutely dry. Damp seeds will freeze to death.

Now you have seeds from successful plants that you can plant when the next growing season comes around. Next year will be the easiest harvest of yummy wild edibles you've ever had.

But what if gardening isn't your style? In that case, let's get into the other forms of storage and preservation.

CANNING, FERMENTING, AND PICKLING

It's called canning. But typically, it means storing food in heat sterilized and sealed jars. You have to boil the jar and the lids in water for 10 minutes to kill anything bad in or on the jar. Otherwise, that nasty will grow there for as long as the jar sits on the shelf.

You can can, pickle or ferment most of the wild foods you collect, perhaps except flowers, seeds, and nuts. Select fresh and firm fruit for canning because your product will sit in liquid for a long time. The firmer the wild food you start with, the firmer your canned product will be when you use it.

In all cases, you need to wash the goodie. Keep changing the water until it's clean. But don't soak your food. You don't want the food to be soggy when you put it into the jar.

Cut your food as you choose. For example, cut fruit to remove the seeds. Roots should also be peeled because the skins were in contact with the soil.

How you prep the food before putting it in the can differs too. Berries and fruit can be canned fresh and are probably better that way. Stalks and shoots can be packed raw or cooked. In the case of greens, barely wilt them in salted water. Roots are best cubed and parboiled for 10 minutes in salted water until they're soft outside but

still firm in the middle. Mushrooms should also be boiled in salted water for 10 minutes.

Now, you're ready to fill your jar. You can add any herbs, seasonings, or spices you like. Or you can keep it simple. Fill the jar carefully and wipe it at the end so you don't get gunk on the rim. This could create air gaps and keep the jar from sealing. Leave about 1" of airspace at the top but pack the food tightly.

Then fill with your boiling canning liquid. For example, you might add sugar syrup to fruit or berries. Or you can use juice, broth, water, or vinegar. If you use vinegar, you're canning a pickle.

Fruit and vegetables can be processed in a boiling water bath. But everything else should be prepared in the pressure cooker, including mushrooms.

If you want your veg to ferment, add a brine instead of water or another canning liquid to your jar. Soft veggies, like most leaves, should bathe in a 5% brine or 1-¼ oz of salt for every quart of water. More durable veggies like roots can soak in a 3% brine or 1 oz salt per quart of water.

And in this case, you don't want your canning liquid to boil. And you don't want to process your can in the pressure cooker or water bath. That would kill the bacteria you're trying to grow.

Canning usually gives you about a year to use your food. But more delicate foods—such as berries—will start to deteriorate. Keep the

jars in a cool, dry place that never gets above 70 degrees and with no direct sunlight. A cool basement corner is a good choice.

Any time you open a jar, put what you don’t use into the fridge. This will give you about one week to use up the rest of it before noticing some deterioration.

DRYING AND ROASTING

Air drying is an age-old method to preserve food. Humans have been drying food for over 10,000 years. You don't need much more than our ancestors did to dry your wild goodies. And it will extend the life of most food (berries, flowers, fruit, leaves, roots, stalks, and mushrooms) for one year if you dry the food until it's hard or crisp.

Like canning, wash your veggies before you start the drying process. They don't need to be clean enough to eat yet. You just need to get the dust and dirt off. Shake off the excess water to help the drying process along.

Drying food is as simple as tying the food in bunches with string or rubber bands. Then, you just hang it up in a warm, dry place away from pests. If you don't have anywhere to hang things up, or if the food doesn't lend itself to being hung up, you can spread it out over a screen. Make sure there's no direct sunlight. Intense light will leech away nutrients and discolor your food.

You can do a few things to speed up the air-drying process. You can put a fan in the area to circulate the air. Also, sliced items will dry faster than whole items. This is especially good for fruit and food with seeds.

If you want to speed up the process even more, you can dry food in the oven. Make sure that all your food is less than ¼" thick. This may

mean chopping some things. Place the chopped food in a single layer on a lined baking sheet. Put this in the oven on the lowest setting, about 125 degrees, for six to eight hours. The exact timing will depend on how wet the food is and your oven's temperature. But you want a result that's hard or crisp.

Nuts and seeds can be roasted, which dries them out. To roast, instead of simply dehydrating, spread out the nuts or seeds on a lined baking sheet. Roast them at 350 degrees for eight minutes or until they get the level of brownness you want. After they've cooled, store them in a glass jar, in a cool and dry place away from the sun.

The nice thing about drying—which is not true of the food you canned—is that you only need to rehydrate the exact amount you need. The rest can stay dried for future use. So, it's a very efficient way of storing food, in my opinion.

THE FRIDGE

The fridge is really for short-term storage. Put things you plan to eat up right away in there. But you can do a few things to make your food last longer in the fridge.

The method I like for storing berries, fruit, flowers, leaves, and mushrooms is to put them in a zip-top bag lined with a paper towel. The towel wicks up any moisture. Also, poke a few holes in the bag to get some air circulation. The air in the fridge is dry, so it will also help dry out any excess moisture. Keeping the food dry prevents it from rotting too quickly. You'll get five days from berries and leaves this way and about a week with other soft fruit like plums, flowers, and mushrooms.

My preferred method for keeping stalks fresh is similar. The difference is that this time you'll sit the stalks in a shallow pool of water, similar to the way you'd store cut flowers. You only need an inch of water at the bottom of your dish. Then cover the stalks with a zip-top bag. It works even better if you partly seal the bag or use a rubber band to close it off a bit. You should get five days out of your stalks this way.

FREEZING

Preserving wild foods in the freezer works well if you know what to do. You'll get about a year of shelf-life by using the freezer. Let's start with roots. They need to be washed, peeled, chopped, and blanched. Let the food cool down and blot off the excess water. First, freeze the food through in a single layer on a baking sheet. After it's frozen, fill a freezer bag with your prepped and frozen roots. Remove the excess air and seal. That's all there is to it.

Fruit and berries can be frozen similarly. Wash them; freeze them through, fill your bags, remove the excess air, and seal. But they don't need to be blanched before the first freeze as your roots do.

Stalks, leaves, and mushrooms should also be cooked before freezing. They don't need to be frozen through first. After cooking, you can just fill your bag, remove the excess air, seal, and voila. You're ready.

I want to note here that frying and steaming are the healthiest ways to cook mushrooms. You'll lose fewer nutrients when you prepare them this way before freezing. But I understand if you're blanching lots of wild foods and just pop the mushrooms in hot water as well.

If you want to freeze nuts and seeds, it's best to do so in a freezer-safe glass jar. But you can also use a freezer bag. Expect about six months of shelf life in the freezer. But frankly, you'll get up to a year

from roasted nuts and seeds in a glass jar in a cool, dry place. Freezing nuts and seeds is possible but not ideal, in my opinion.

ROOT CELLAR

While you can do a lot with just your cool basement, a root cellar will take your food storage capabilities to a different level. It will give you a six-month window for all the wild edible candidates you put inside.

I know what you're thinking. But a root cellar doesn't have to be expensive. It can be as simple as a hole in the ground, literally. Or dig your hole and line it with a metal garbage can. If you have a few more resources, you can add two walls to the coldest corner of your basement and insulate them to make a root cellar.

Yes, there are upfront costs to this method of storage. But once built, they are low or no energy. They also need little to no maintenance. It could be feasible if you live in a cool or temperate climate. But a root cellar will be more challenging if you live in a warm climate or place with a high water table.

More important than the cellar style is the conditions they produce when well designed. You want a temperature range between 32 and 40 degrees and very high humidity of up to 95 percent. The cool temps slow down the decomposition of the food, and the high humidity keeps the food from drying out.

There's a lot to know about building a root cellar. There are entire books about how to make them. I can't get into all of that here. This

book is designed to be a beginner's guide. But I can share what you can do with it in terms of wild edibles.

Given the name, you can probably imagine that roots do well in root cellars. The roots we talked about here—burdock, chicory, wild radish, and others—would all be good choices for your root cellar. But you can also store seeds in your root cellar for up to five years. Your nuts will last up to six months there.

When I have a special ingredient, such as fresh berries or young cattail shoots, I feel motivated to get the most flavor and joy out of them. Keeping it fresh and viable for as long as possible is part of how I get the most from the food. These basics of saving your wild edibles in ways that will preserve their flavor and shelf life will help you get the most out of the food you gathered.

If you need a quick reference, check out the chart at the back of this book. It has a short description of each method and the shelf-life you'll get from it.

CHAPTER 9

HEALTH, SAFETY, AND NUTRITION

We've discussed the nutrition facts for each plant highlighted in this book. So, you know they're full of vitamins and minerals and have other health benefits. You also know that these plants are abundant. I tried to pick plants that grow in vast swaths of the United States.

Even if I didn't include a plant here, you should know that about half of the 400,000 species of plants in the world are edible for humans. So, about 50% of what you see outside your door could be edible. In other words, wild food is abundant and easy to access.

But there are seven more fundamental reasons that wild foods are a superlatively healthy choice. They are so important that I couldn't leave them out. After reading this chapter, I'm sure you'll agree.

Wild edibles are so much healthier than commercial crops.

As with all things in life, there are pros and cons, good stuff to benefit from, and bad stuff to avoid. The same is true for foraging. But as you'll see, the good far outweighs the bad regarding eating wild food.

THE INCREDIBLE NUTRITION OF WILD EDIBLE FOODS

Wild food can be a vital part of maintaining your health. For example, wild roots are filled with a ton of antioxidants and fiber while having little fat, calories, or cholesterol. They also contain large amounts of carotenoids, which help decrease cancer risk and protect the eyes.

Veggies are low in calories and have a ton of vitamins and minerals. They are also low in saturated fat. And fruit, especially wild fruit, is packed with nutrients. Blue and black fruit especially contain large amounts of flavonoids, polyphenols, and anthocyanins. They also have large amounts of folate, vitamins A and C, and fiber. All this nutrition will help you *maintain* your health.

But wild edible foods can help you *improve* your health as well. They have an insane amount of nutrition, especially compared to traditional foods, which can have you feeling more energetic and vigorous in no time.

There are some sizable differences between the wild edibles we consume and the traditional foods we get from the store, from the minerals and vitamins to the phytochemicals. Let’s look at the nutrients that Americans need most, where we as a nation are deficient.

For example, you need **calcium** for healthy teeth and bones. It also helps with blood pressure, blood clotting, and nerve function. Many wild edibles contain much more calcium than regular foods. **Dandelion**, for instance, has more calcium per weight than spinach!

Magnesium works alongside calcium to help support strong teeth and bones, muscle and nerve function, and blood pressure levels, among other things. The modern American diet doesn't contain enough magnesium. But **purslane and red clover** both have a large amount of magnesium. So, you'll never have to worry about a deficiency if you consume these wild edibles!

Zinc helps with protein manufacturing, immunity, and wound healing. **Chickweed and hairy bittercress** have significant levels of zinc. A few servings of these will give a higher zinc dose than even some multivitamins.

Then there is **potassium**, which helps with the contraction of muscles, fluid balance, and nerve function. Eat **nettle and purslane** to get your dose of this critical mineral.

Fiber is another nutrient Americans need to eat more. It helps you manage your blood sugar and cholesterol. It helps move food through your system. And it is the food of our microbiome. These are bacteria that eat the fiber that your body can't digest. It keeps them alive, and they need a variety of it to stay healthy.

The trillions of microorganisms that live in your intestines help you get the most benefit from the nutrients in your food and help regulate

your immune system, body weight, and metabolism. They also affect your mood and brain function. So, it's essential to keep them healthy.

In addition to the sheer amount of fiber in wild food, there's a benefit in variety. People that eat various plants have more diverse microbiomes than those that don't. So, adding a range of wild foods to your diet will keep this gut flora happier than if you eat a limited variety. In other words, trying as many of the foods in this book as possible would be best.

Meanwhile, less than 10% of Americans get enough fiber in their diets. The recommendation is 25 to 30 grams each day. Most people only eat 15 grams daily. Wild plants are full of fiber. For example, **wild raspberries** have 10 grams of fiber per cup, while **lamb's quarter** has 4 grams. A cup of each daily will fix your "fiber gap." And there are many other examples I could put here.

That's not to say that commercial produce doesn't have fiber. It does. But wild food tends to be more rustic than commercial food. It has more seeds and pulp than commercial foods, which have been bred to be less fibrous.

The retail food industry responds to what people buy. And often, fibrous foods are considered unpalatable by most Americans. So, pound-for-pound, wild food generally offers more fiber than its commercial brethren.

THE BENEFITS OF GOOD SOIL

In the United States, it's common to see the same crop planted in the same place for decades. But, years and years of cultivation of the same plant in the same place depletes the soil, which means there are fewer vitamins and other nutrients. So over time, commercially farmed crops get less and less nutritious.

It's true that commercial agriculture uses fertilizers and lots of them. But it's not necessarily the case that these fertilizers add nutrients to the plants. The focus is on producing more or bigger crops faster. Adding fertilizer isn't about adding nutrients for health. Those gigantic strawberries and oranges at the store may look pretty, but they're actually nutritionally diluted.

The soil in your prized foraging spots is shared by many kinds of plants and benefits from the regular addition of plant residues. The leaves, twigs, non-viable seeds, decayed fruit, and other material that fall every growing season enrich the soil rather than depleting it. Plants in this kind of soil will have healthier root systems, supporting more abundant foliage, flowers, fruit, and seeds.

That's why wild plants you forage will have 50% or more nutrition than commercial plants, just because they grow in soil that hasn't been depleted by intensive monocropping. They grow in soil that toxic chemicals haven't damaged and that natural processes have enriched.

Of course, a wild plant growing next to a commercially managed field or in a contaminated site may also suffer from similar problems to a commercially grown plant. But that's why I advise you to look for clean and unpolluted foraging locations. Not only will it keep you safe from the bad stuff. It's where you'll find food with more of the good stuff.

YOU'LL GET EXERCISE

Adults need 150 minutes of moderate exercise per week. But the average for most Americans is about 120 minutes per week, 30 minutes off the mark. Adding one short foraging trip of 20 to 30 minutes per week could help you meet this goal.

Kids need about 60 minutes of exercise each day. But only 25% of kids get enough movement each day. You may not want to go out foraging with your kids every day, but it can certainly help put a dent in their weekly exercise needs.

Gardening burns about 300 calories an hour. Hiking burns about that much at a minimum. Foraging combines both of those activities. So, it definitely counts as exercise. Consider hiking out of your favorite foraging spot with pounds of fresh fruit, leaves, and roots. You'll break a sweat for sure.

Plus, there are so many mental health benefits from foraging. It's always calming to interact with nature. Feeling the sun or wind on your skin, the dirt in your hands and the solidity of the ground beneath you is very centering. And just the act of moving your body reduces stress and will help you sleep better.

EAT A PHYTOCHEMICAL BONANZA

That bitter flavor you notice in wild foods often comes from phytochemicals. These substances are biologically active and protect the plant from bacteria and fungi invasions. Wild plants have to fight off invaders naturally. They don't have support from fungicides and pesticides to kill off pests. So, they need all these substances, and in higher concentrations, to survive.

That's why wild edibles have higher levels of phytochemicals than commercial food. They also have a wider variety of phytochemicals than commercial food. When you eat food with these substances, they take up that activity in your body, helping it fight off diseases and stimulating your immune system.

Phytochemicals also have antioxidative properties. This means they can help keep your skin young and supple, prevent cancer, and also are great for general inflammation. Wild blueberries, for example, have a ton of antioxidants. They're called anthocyanins, and wild ones have about 30% more than blueberries cultivated on the farm.

YOU'LL STAY AWAY FROM BAD CHEMICALS

Commercial crops today are produced using so many chemicals. Fungicides, pesticides, rodenticides, growth regulators, fertilizers, attractants, repellants, coloring agents, and preservatives are slathered all over the food in grocery stores. Despite being labeled as "organic," many of these foods at the supermarket are still covered in chemicals.

The agricultural industry takes the position that low-level exposure to all these chemicals has no negative health effects. But recent studies suggest that even low levels of these chemicals can affect your hormones. Other health impacts on the skin, the digestive system, brain, lungs, and reproductive system have been reported. So, this is serious.

Adding more wild edibles to your diet is a great way to reduce or avoid exposure to these chemicals. Since you picked this food yourself, you'll know whether it is an uncontaminated place. As you visit your foraging areas over time, you'll develop a sense of the kinds of chemical impacts in an area. And you'll be able to find more untouched areas, essentially free from the problems of commercial agriculture.

WHO NEEDS ENGINEERED FOOD, REALLY?

Humans have been altering food for millennia. Crossbreeding plants with characteristics you like is a traditional form of engineering food. So is saving seeds from the most prolific plants to plant the following year. But this kind of modification is thousands of years old. We know their effects because we have thousands of years of data about how they affect our bodies. So, this isn't a concern.

But modern plants aren't just bred to produce more or larger fruit. They are also bred to be sweeter. For example, people prefer sweeter strawberries over tart ones. This means that the average store consumer is eating more sugar than in the past.

Wild foods are less sweet than commercially grown food. Instead, they have more depth of flavor. So, eating more wild foods will improve blood sugar levels while providing more flavorful food. It's a win-win, in my opinion.

Another issue for me is irradiation. Some foods are exposed to radiation to kill the microorganisms hiding in them. This practice is common with fresh fruit, vegetables, and flours, although it's unlikely you'll know which food has been treated in this way. While it's generally considered a safe process, it reduces the nutrition of treated food. The amount of the reduction is like cooking or freezing. But why reduce your food's nutrition if it's not necessary? Wild food

you picked in an area you are familiar with doesn't need irradiation. It just needs a good wash, and it's ready to use.

Since the 1970s, scientists have been able to insert DNA from one kind of plant into another. Most often, they do this to create a more commercially viable product or simply more product, but hardly ever to make a more nutritious one.

Making genetically modified food is generally considered safe, although we don't know for sure. And some people have experienced allergic reactions to GMO foods. But why risk problems if it's not necessary? There is so much free, natural, healthy, nutrient-dense food out there that you don't need to eat GMO food if you don't want it.

FORAGING ISN'T REGULATED

Foraging is a largely unregulated activity. That means no one is watching over the quality and safety of the wild plants out there. No one is labeling or removing the toxic plants. All of that will be your job. You'll have to keep yourself safe when foraging in contrast to the many layers of regulation and oversight in the commercial food industry.

That's not to say that commercially grown food is always safe. Salmonella, E. coli, and Listeria are always a concern with commercial produce. In fact, 1,600 Americans are diagnosed with Listeria infections yearly, and about 260 people die from them. Recalls usually get this contaminated food off shelves quickly. But still, the risk is there.

On the other hand, keeping yourself safe while enjoying wild food is quite easy. It's likely part of the reason you bought this book. It tells you which plants to avoid and which you'll enjoy. It tells you which areas to avoid and which to visit. And it tells you how to stay safe while you're out there hunting and while you are at home cooking and eating.

You're completely capable of self-regulating yourself in the world of foraging. And after you finish reading this book, you'll have all the information you need to do so. And what you eat will be so much healthier than anything you can buy in the store.

Whether wild or commercial, eating more produce is always better than eating less. But, compared to each other, there are so many more reasons to eat wild food rather than skip it. There was really only one con to wild foods listed in the text above, and you're fixing it now. This book lets you know how to keep yourself safe while foraging, with no regulatory authority needed.

Adding wild foods to your diet is a no-brainer. For many people, wild edibles offer nutrition and health benefits they'd otherwise never get.

CHAPTER 10

PLANTS TO AVOID

When I was about 12, I went for a walk in a field with tall grass, about chest height for me at the time. It was summer, and I was in a t-shirt and shorts. I don't know what I touched or what touched me, but 20 minutes later,

my whole body felt like it was on fire.

Before heading out food hunting, it's good to know what awaits you. And knowing what not to eat (or touch) is just as important as knowing what's tasty. Each year, over 40 million people in the US go to the doctor because of poisonous plants. It's usually contact with the sap oil that causes problems for people.

If your reaction is mild, you can usually treat these problems yourself. But it's better to avoid them altogether if possible. That's what we'll cover here. This chapter is about avoiding harmful plants so you can spend more time collecting the tasty ones.

A FEW TIPS ON AVOIDING POISONOUS PLANTS

There are enough good plants out there that you really don’t need to test plants for toxicity. Stick to what you know and what’s in this book. And don’t assume a plant won't harm you if you see animals eating it. That’s an old myth.

Still, there will be times when you’re unsure about a plant. So, use these steps to figure out if you want to pick this plant or not.

First, wearing gloves is never a bad idea. There is always the risk of touching something by mistake. And you’ll be protected from thorns or stingers.

Next, look at the leaves. Three-in-one isn’t fun. If the leaves are in a set of three, let it be. This rule applies to poison ivy or poison oak for sure. But, if you see any leaf with three leaflets, each with short stems, it’s poisonous. Avoid it.

Then, see if there are any common traits of being poisonous. Spines, fine hairs, a milky sap, grand flowerheads that are umbrella-shaped like hogweed or water hemlock, or leaves that are waxy and shiny are obvious signs. White and green berries are also inedible. If you see those, your question about edibility is answered.

Lastly, smell it. If you notice a rotting or musty smell, avoid it. If it smells like an almond or pear, that’s cyanide.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU TOUCH SOMETHING BAD

So, you accidentally touched some poison ivy or poison oak. What do you do then? You'll probably see a rash and have some tingling and blisters.

The first thing is to figure out which plant you touched. If you aren't sure, just rinse the affected area with disinfectant and water. Don't rub your hands over the area. Use gloves. Call a doctor or poison control if you notice your heart rate or breathing changing.

PLANTS TO AVOID

These are all plants that you might encounter out there. Some of them are very dangerous, even deadly. Others will just ruin your day. But no matter the severity of their effects, I want you to know about them so you can steer clear.

Poison ivy has two to four-inch-long leaves that cluster in threes. Sometimes the leaves turn red in the fall. The leaves on young plants can look droopy, like it needs more water.




There’s an eastern variety and a western one. The western species kind of looks like a small shrub. The eastern version is more like a climbing vine.

Poison oak is also a shrub with clusters of three leaves too. The pacific version is very vinelike. If you notice green or yellow flowers and clusters of green-yellow or white berries, that’s poison oak.

Poison sumac looks like a shrub and usually has about seven to thirteen leaf pairs on a branch. It produces glossy berries that are cream or pale yellow.

Giant hogweed is an invasive plant that grows up to 14 feet tall. It's not a plant you'll miss. The leaves can be five feet wide. Its distinctive feature is prominent, showy blooms as big as a baseball.

The sap of this plant will burn you. It can even blind you if it gets in your eyes. It's only been spotted in 10 states: Maine, Maryland, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Washington. It's not everywhere, but it's one you want to avoid.

The Castor oil plant is beautiful but is considered the most poisonous plant in the world. People sometimes plant it as a decorative in their garden. So, you might see this when foraging in a lawn or yard. But the flowers, leaves, and seeds are all poisonous if eaten. It is fatal to both animals and humans. It can cause dehydration, vomiting, diarrhea, liver and kidney

failure, and even death.

Bitter nightshade is no joke either and is quite common in yards. This vinelike plant grows up to six feet tall and blooms in mid or late summer. It produces beautiful juicy, glossy red berries, but it’s poisonous. It contains solanine, which can give you a headache.

You'll likely also feel tired. At its worst, it causes vomiting, trembles, diarrhea, and dilates your pupils. If you or someone you know eats this, call a doctor immediately.

Watch out for water hemlock. It's the most poisonous plant native to North America. It usually grows between two and six feet tall and has small clusters of billowy white flowers growing from hairless stems. If you notice red blotches on the stem, that's water hemlock.

It loves to grow in very wet areas like swamps and wetlands. But you may see it in wet fields too.

You might be tempted to check out Canada moonseed's berries because they look like table grapes. The plant resembles grapes in other ways too. It grows on a climbing vine, and the leaves resemble grape leaves. But it is deadly. To check, look for more than one seed. If it's got two to four, it's edible. If it's got one, that's moonseed. You'll also know because the seed will look like a crescent moon.

Horse nettle berries look super juicy and plump, like small cherry tomatoes. But this plant is poisonous. It can cause fever, headache, vomiting, and diarrhea.

Pokeberries look super tasty but don’t be duped by them. The berries are safe for animals but not for people. A handful will take out a child, with a little more knocking out an adult. They look similar to elderberries, but pokeberries grow in one long pendant with more space between berries. Elderberries grow from stems like spokes that converge in the center.

Wild cherry trees produce beautiful red fruit. But you can’t eat the rest of this tree. The leaves and pits contain cyanide, a fast-acting and sometimes lethal toxin. You’ll probably be fine if you swallow one pit and don’t chew it. But it’s worth being careful. To identify this tree, look for leaves with serrated edges. The leaf’s underside will be a lighter green than the top of the leaf. You’ll also notice a distinctive reddish-brown bark on this tree. Young stems will be slightly shiny

Dogwood produces red berries in the fall and winter. The red berries grow where the leaves and branches meet. Some people develop rashes from contact with them, but birds can eat them.

It’s pretty easy to identify Dogwood trees. They have oval leaves with smooth edges. The bark is grey and looks like the skin of a reptile.

Buckthorn is found in forests and parks. While they are toxic, they’re usually not going to kill you. They produce shiny, black berries but avoid them if you don’t want a bad day.

A rosary pea will send a person to the hospital if you eat it. This little pea is highly toxic. People have died threading these on necklaces and sticking themselves with the threading needles by mistake.




Probably the one nut to avoid is buckeye, a tree that grows in the central and eastern parts of the United States. It looks similar to a hickory nut, but once you break these open, you'll see the whole nutmeat inside, similar to an almond. That's a sign to stay away.


Do you have a first aid kit in the house? I do too. I rarely have to use it: a bandage here, an alcohol pad there. But it's good that it's there when I need it. It's a safeguard. That's the way I think of this chapter. Most of the plants you see will be harmless. But it's good to be able to tell when one is not.

Seeing the first aid kit in the house doesn’t scare you, does it? Neither should learning about these plants. Don’t let this chapter scare you away from getting out there. In fact, you’re safer now that you know about them than before you read this chapter.

Now, are you ready for your next steps?

CHAPTER 11

NEXT STEPS IN YOUR FORAGING JOURNEY

You did it! You made it to the end and are ready to get out there.

You learned about more than 30 wild edible plants, some gear you might want to help you gather them, how to make them taste good, how to stay safe while doing all that, and more. But there's so much to know and discover about foraging. It would be impossible to include it all in this one book. Yes, there really are that many easy-to-harvest plants for beginners out there.

I covered a lot of ground in this book. But honestly, I had to cut some plants out because I didn't want the book to be overwhelming. I left out plants that were like others already in the book. I wanted to give you as wide a selection of plants as possible. And I left out plants with smaller growing ranges. But they may still grow in large swaths of the United States.

I had to limit this book to the 'slightly familiar' plants too. Many of the plants you read about are ones you've already seen in lawns or fields, on a walk, hike, or run. They are common. But maybe you just didn't know that they were edible. Or perhaps you weren't sure about some differences between them and their inedible cousins. Hopefully, this book has answered these questions for you.

And maybe you noticed a few plants that were mentioned but just not discussed in detail. I sprinkled a few other fascinating plants in there

to pique your interest in learning more. If you have the time and interest, check these out. This is my honorable mention list. These are all tasties that you can turn into exciting dishes.

- Purslane
- Nettle
- Sheep Sorrel
- Echinacea
- Hairy bittercress
- Wild garlic
- Horsetail
- Bamboo
- Lotus
- Cloudberry
- Silverweed
- Fireweed

Don’t let this be the end-of growing in foraging knowledge. This book should not be the only one you consult when you’re out on your foraging adventures. Instead, this is a beginner resource that’ll help you find tasty wild food.

Foraging is ancient. Foraging is the future.

Humans have thousands of years of foraging knowledge. Today, we pass it to each other in books, in groups dedicated to mycology, foraging, or gardening. And sometimes we share it with stories and good food at the dinner table.

Tasty food is one of the oldest but most joyful parts of life. I want everyone to access as much of it as they wish. I want you to access

as much of it as you wish. And hopefully, now, you can. There's something tasty outside right now if you want it.

You can, but you don't need to go to expensive restaurants to enjoy unique, cutting-edge dishes. You don't even need to go to gourmet groceries. You just need to go out into your yard.

How about this as a menu, with all the dishes focused on wild, foraged ingredients:

- Appetizer: Dandelion flower fritters
- Main: Watercress pesto pizza with prosciutto
- Dessert: Prickly pear fruit salad with wild rose syrup

What would you pay for a meal like this in a restaurant? All these dishes are based on ideas you've already encountered in this book.

Other than the foraged ingredients, you'd just need some flour, yeast, sugar, water, eggs, oil, and a bit of prosciutto to make it at home. Most items in this list are pantry staples, not anything unusual or expensive. You probably have most, if not all, of them in your cabinet right now. Do you see how adding a few wild ingredients can amp up a meal?

And this is not the only example menu I could come up with using the ideas in this book. There is an infinite number. If you want some more ideas, check out our free booklet: Ten More Wild Edibles You Can Forage Right Now. The link to get it is at the beginning of this book.

I'd also like to know about the tasty dishes you made after reading this book. Write to me at greerjacksonbooks@gmail.com. I'd love to be inspired by them.

I wish you tons of fun and lots of good eating on your foraging journey.

PART IV
REFERENCES

DISTRIBUTION QUICK REFERENCE

All the plant distributions in this book are based on native or naturalized populations, as reported by USDA. The data and documentation for each plant in this book can be found at: https://plants.usda.gov/home. You can look up the symbol below to see more detail about all the plants in this book.

Name	Code
Bedstraw	GALIU
Black Walnuts	JUNI
Burdock	ARCTI
Cattails	TYPHA
Chicory	CIIN
Crabgrass	DIGIT2
Curly Dock	RUCR
Dandelions	TAOF
Daylily	HEMER

Elderberry	SAMBU
Evening Primrose	OENOT
Honeysuckle	LONIC
Hops	HULU
Jerusalem Artichoke	HETU
Lady's Thumb	POPE3
Lamb's Quarters	CHAL7
Millet	PAMI2
Pine Nuts	PIPA
Plantain	PLMA2
Prickly Pear	OPUNT
Queen Anne’s Lace	DACA6
Self-Heal	PRUNE
Watercress	NAOF
Wild Asparagus	ASPAR

Wild Blackberries	RUBUS
Wild Plum	PRAM
Wild Radish	RARA2
Wild Raspberries	RUID
Wild Rose	RONU, ROAR3
Wild Strawberry	FRVI
Yarrow	ACMI2

Morel distributions can be found at: https://www.thegreatmorel.com/morel-sightings/

Black trumpet and chanterelle distributions can be found here: https://www.mossyoak.com/our-obsession/blogs/how-to/the-ultimate-guide-how-to-forage-and-cook-chanterelle-mushrooms

You can find the data behind all the other mushroom distributions here: https://www.mushroomstalkers.com/

FLAVOR QUICK REFERENCE

Name	Flavor
Bedstraw	Like a mild green bean, but very bitter. It may have some roughness due to the hairs when raw. Cooking shaves off some of the bite.
Black Trumpet Mushrooms	Nutty, deep, and almost smoky. They will turn other foods black or grey. So, you may want to cook these separately.
Black Walnuts	Strong, musky, with a bittersweet flavor.
Burdock	Sweet and crunchy, similar to artichoke.
Cattails	The shoot tastes like a cucumber in texture and flavor but is a bit more bitter.
Chanterelle Mushrooms	They are peppery and smoky. They smell like apricots in the wild.
Chicken Of the Woods Mushrooms	Lemony, tasting almost like lobster, crab, or oyster! But most often, people think it tastes like chicken.
Chicory	Known for its bitterness. Cooking changes the flavor to toasty and nutty. If roasted, they can even be somewhat sweet like carrots.
Crabgrass	Nutty with a fluffy texture like couscous when cooked. It absorbs the flavors around it.
Curly Dock	Slightly sour. They get more bitter as they get older. Younger

	leaves may numb your tongue.
Dandelions	Dandelion florets have a sweet flavor similar to honey.
Daylily	Similar to jicama when raw. Like sweetish potatoes when cooked.
Elderberry	Balance between earthy and tart, a mix between blackberry and blueberry; moderately firm and juicy.
Evening Primrose	The roots are sweet and spicy.
Hedgehog Mushrooms	It smells sweet, fruity, earthy, and nutty. Maybe a spicy hit at the end. A more intense flavor than chanterelles. Its texture is a bit chewy after cooking.
Honeysuckle	Slightly sweet, similar to honey
Hops	Similar in taste and texture to asparagus with a bit of nuttiness.
Jerusalem Artichoke	Crunchy with a hit of a nutty and sweet taste. Similar to water chestnuts in texture. Some people say the flavor is similar to artichoke.
Lady's Thumb	Crunchy, zesty, and slightly bitter seeds. People compare it to black pepper.
Lamb's Quarters	Mineral-like taste similar to chard or spinach. The leaves have a texture described as pillowy when steamed.
Millet	Nutty, sort of like corn, but sweeter
Morel Mushrooms	Woody and nutty, like the loamy earth where you harvest them.

Oyster Mushrooms	A subtle taste of seafood and sometimes a bit like anise.
Pine Nuts	A soft and creamy texture; a nutty taste that’s like cashews
Plantain	Like asparagus with nutty flavors. Earthy and grassy. The leaves become waxier as they mature.
Prickly Pear	Like a fruit salad with mostly watermelon in it. Very juicy when ripe.
Puffball Mushrooms	Neutral but mushroomy. Some people describe the texture as like tofu.
Queen Anne's Lace	Fresh, a little bit like a carrot. A good parsley substitute.
Self-Heal	Fairly neutral in comparison to other wild edibles. Slightly bitter and sweet with a hint of rosemary. It has been described as eating romaine lettuce.
Watercress	Crunchy like cabbage when raw. Peppery and hot flavors like wasabi or turnip greens. It can be bitter when mature or overcooked.
Wild Asparagus	Subtly sweet-when young, slightly bitter flavor that increases with maturity. Grassy undertones. Crunchy when raw, like a green bean.
Wild Blackberries	Much like a commercial blackberry, with an “al dente” texture. Sweet with just a hint of sour, if ripe. They have seeds that add a bit of crunch.

Wild Plum	Typical plum flavor, but sweet and slightly tart, with thick and slightly bitter skin.
Wild Radish	Earthy and peppery taste, similar to commercial radishes.
Wild Raspberries	Like a combination of blackberries and raspberries, sweet and tart flavor. A very delicate fruit that breaks apart in clumps when mashed slightly.
Wild Rose	A potent mixture of green apple and strawberry. The petals are satiny in your mouth.
Wild Strawberry	A more concentrated version of domesticated strawberry with floral notes. The fruit is very juicy and tender when fully ripened.
Yarrow	The leaves and flowers taste a bit like anise and have a bitter bite.

PLANTS BY SEASON QUICK REFERENCE

This chart should give you an idea of the best things to harvest each season.

1. Hedgehog mushrooms grow in winter on the west coast and during spring, summer, and fall on the east.
2. Most fall items will still be available until the ground freezes. So, if your area doesn't freeze, you may be able to harvest even up to the following spring.

Name	Winter	Spring	Summer	Fall
Bedstraw		Leaves	Leaves	Leaves
Black Trumpet Mushrooms			Mushrooms	Mushrooms
Black Walnuts				Nuts
Burdock		Leaves	Leaves	Roots
Cattails		Stalks	Flowers	Roots
Chanterelle Mushrooms		Mushrooms	Mushrooms	Mushrooms
Chicken Of the Woods Mushrooms		Mushrooms	Mushrooms	Mushrooms
Chicory		Leaves	Flowers	Roots
Crabgrass			Seeds	Seeds
Curly Dock		Leaves	Leaves	Leaves

Dandelions		Leaves	Leaves	Leaves
Daylily		Stalks	Flowers	Roots
Elderberry		Flowers	Berries	
Evening Primrose		Leaves	Stalks	Roots
Hedgehog Mushrooms		Mushrooms	Mushrooms	Mushrooms
Honeysuckle		Flowers	Leaves	Leaves
Hops		Stalks	Leaves	Flowers
Jerusalem Artichoke				Roots
Lady's Thumb		Leaves	Flowers	Seeds
Lamb's Quarters		Leaves	Leaves	Leaves
Millet				Seeds

Morel Mushrooms		Mushrooms		
Oyster Mushrooms		Mushrooms	Mushrooms	Mushrooms
Pine Nuts			Nuts	Nuts
Plantain		Leaves	Leaves	Leaves
Prickly Pear	Fruit	Pads	Fruit	Fruit

Puffball Mushrooms			Mushrooms	Mushrooms
Queen Anne's Lace		Leaves	Flowers	Roots
Self-Heal		Leaves	Leaves	Leaves
Watercress	Leaves	Leaves	Leaves	Leaves
Wild Asparagus		Stalks	Stalks	
Wild Blackberries		Leaves	Berries	
Wild Plum			Fruit	Fruit
Wild Radish		Leaves	Flowers	Roots
Wild Raspberries		Berries		
Wild Rose		Flowers	Flowers	Fruit
Wild Strawberry		Leaves	Berries	
Yarrow		Leaves	Leaves	Leaves

EDIBLE PARTS PER PLANT QUICK REFERENCE

Name	Berries	Fruit	Nuts	Leaves	Flowers	Seeds	Stalks	Roots
Bedstraw		x		x	x	x		
Black Walnuts			x					
Burdock				x			X	x
Cattails					x		X	x
Chicory				x	x			x
Crabgrass						x		
Curly Dock				x		x	X	
Dandelions				x	x			x
Daylily					x		X	x
Elderberry	x							
Evening Primrose				x	x	x	X	x
Honeysuckle				x	x			
Hops		x		x			X	
Jerusalem Artichoke								x
Lady's Thumb				x	x	x	X	
Lamb's Quarters				x	x	x		

Millet					x		
Pine Nuts		x					
Plantain			x		x		
Prickly Pear		x				x	
Queen Anne's Lace			x	x	x	x	X
Self-Heal			x	x		x	
Watercress			x	x		x	X
Wild Asparagus						x	
Wild Blackberries	x		x	x		x	
Wild Plum		x					
Wild Radish		x	x	x			X
Wild Raspberries	x		x	x			
Wild Rose		x	x	x		x	
Wild Strawberry	x		x	x			
Yarrow			x	X			X

PRESERVATION QUICK REFERENCE

	Method	Duration
Berries	Pickled, refrigerator	1 month
	Freeze w/o bag, place in bag, put in freezer	6 months in normal, 1 year in deep
	Can	12 months, but will notice deterioration after 6 months
	Root cellar	No
	Refrigerator in zip top bag	One week
	Dried	1 year at 60ºf, 6 months at 80ºf
Fruit	Pickled, refrigerator	Up to 2 months
	Freeze w/o bag, place in bag, put in freezer	1 year
	Prep, then can	Up to 18 months
	Root cellar	No
	Fridge	3 - 5 days

	Dried	1 year at 60ºf, 6 months at 80ºf
Nuts	Pickled, refrigerator	Possible with green walnuts, not everyone likes them. 2-to-3-year shelf life. To infuse alcohol is popular.
	Freeze	1 year
	Can	No
	Root cellar	3 to 6 months if you live in a warm place, glass is best
	Refrigerator in zip top bag	Several years
	Roasting, 350 for 8 minutes	1 year
Leaves	Pickling	1 year
	Blanch then freeze	1 year
	Blanch, can	2 years
	Root cellar	No
	Refrigerator in zip top bag	Up to 7 days
	Dried	1 - 3 years
Flowers	Pickled, refrigerator	No

	Steam or blanch then freeze	No
	Can	No
	Root cellar	No
	Refrigerator in zip top bag	3 - 5 days
	Dried	1 - 3 years
Seeds	Pickled, refrigerator	1 year
	Freeze	No
	Can	No
	Root cellar	3 - 5 years
	Refrigerator in zip top bag	No
	Roasting @ 350f 8 minutes	1 year
Stalks	Pickled, refrigerator	1 month
	Blanch then freeze	8 - 12 months
	Can	3 - 5 years
	Cellar	No
	Refrigerator with	3 - 5 days is best

	zip top bag over in water	
	Dried	3 - 6 months
Roots	Pickled, refrigerator	3 weeks for a quick pickle
	Freeze w/o bag, place in bag, put in freezer	3 months, cooked
	Peel, can	1 year, pressure canned
	Root cellar	5 - 8 months
	Refrigerator in zip top bag	3 - 4 weeks
	Dried	1 - 2 years
Mushrooms	Pickled, refrigerator	1 month
	Steam or blanch then freeze	6 months
	Can	3 - 5 years
	Root cellar	6 months
	Refrigerator in zip top bag	2 weeks
	Dried	Indefinitely
	Tinctures and	1 year

extracts	
Marinated mushrooms	2 weeks