# Learn how to identify and prepare edible wild plants. Also learn where to find them and if they have any nutritional value.

When picking edible plants it is crucial that you can properly identify them, because many are similar in appearance to poisonous plants. The optimum time to ensure

proper identification is when the plants are flowering, since most have a unique appearance of flowers or fruits. To make extra certain if in doubt observe the plant

through the growing season if it is possible.

#### **BROOKLIME**

This plant is found in the spring and summer in shallow water, swamps or ditches. It can be used in salad and as a potherb. The young shoots can be eaten before flowering, and the leaves can be eaten after flowering like watercress. Its leaves are oblong and toothed and there are one or two flowers in long simple clusters. The flowers may be lilac, rosy, bluish, or white in color. The fruit is a flattened and round capsule at the apex.

#### **CAMASS BULBS**

This plant is found in the mountain meadows and swamps of Washington, Oregon, and Northern California. It's flowers are usually blue. You can roast the bulbs by building a fire in a two foot deep pit. First place green wood over the fire. Then place some bark over the wood. Cover the bark with grass and leaves. Next put the bulbs over the bark. Finally, cover it with dirt or sand. The bulbs can also be prepared like potatoes.

### **CAT TAIL**

Cat tail can be found in the spring and summer in or along side the fresh or brackish water of marshes and ponds. It can be used in salads, as a starchy vegetable,

bread, asparagus, cooked vegetable, soup, pickle, and jelly. It is a tall plant (up to 15 feet) with stiff pale-green leaves. The flower is a dense spike that changes in color from green to brown with a cotton-like material being produced on top as it grows. The young rootstocks have a sweet taste and are high in starchy material. They should be grated, boiled, and the starchy material drained out for use.

### **CHICKWEED**

These annual plants can be used in salads and as potherbs. They are found in waste lots, gardens, and disturbed soils, and they survive winter frosts. It is good wholesome green vegetable that, when boiled, resembles spinach in taste. The leaves can also be eaten when boiled.

### **CLOVER**

Clover can be used in salad, to make tea, as a breadstuff, and a potherb. The seeds and dried flowers can be used as a nutritious and wholesome bread food. It can be eaten raw or boiled. Eastern whites can be used to make clover tea by brewing the dried flower heads. It is best to dip clover leaves in salt water before eating or preparation to aid in digestion, and eating the leaves in excess can cause bloating.

#### **COW PEA**

These peas are found in thickets on roadsides and fields in the southern states and up into Indiana and Missouri. The look like any garden pea and they have great value as a food. They can be eaten green or after they've been dried.

### **DANDELION**



This plant can be used as a potherb, in salad, and as a coffee substitute. Young leaves can be picked in early spring before the plant has flowered to add to salads, it can also be used in replace of spinach. The leaves should be boiled in two waters to rid bitterness. The roots can be ground to make a bitter coffee, and eaten for survival during a famine. Dandelion greens also have a tremendous amount of Vitamin A (25 times that of tomato juice and 50 times that of asparagus).

### **FOX GRAPES**

They are mainly found in the south and Midwestern states, and are similar in appearance to Tokey grapes found in Californian fields. The grapes are very sour when

eaten raw, but are good in jam or jelly without using Jell or pectin.

#### **GINSENG**

Ginseng is found in rich woods in the eastern US, but is nearly extinct in the wild. It can be used as food during a famine or emergency and for tea. It has a starchy quality when eaten raw, but is good when boiled in salty water. It's root is edible as well as aromatic. The leaves can be make into a good tea.

# **GREAT BURDOCK**

Burdock is commonly found around abandoned buildings and manure piles and in residential yards in the northern US and in southern Canada. Peel the shoots and it can be eaten raw or with salad and vinegar. The stocks can be boiled or fried in butter. The peeled roots can be boiled in salt and pepper. Burdock can even be mashed into cakes and fried in butter.

### **INDIAN TURNIP**

This plant has a peppery quality to it, and has long been used as a source of food in nature. It is not palatable when eaten raw. It should be thoroughly dried and then boiled or baked. To boil or roast it, dry it and then pound it into flour.

#### LAMB'S QUARTERS

Commonly regarded as a weed, this plant can be found in Europe and North America in damp or acidic soils from spring to fall. Lamb's quarters can be eaten as a

steamed vegetable or in soups and salads. In the summer it can be used as a potherb and in place of spinach.

### MARSH MARIGOLDS

These are a marsh plant found in early spring in moist grounds and watery meadows, especially in clay or limestone areas. It has kidney-shaped green leaves with

orange-yellow flowers that resemble buttercups. The young leaves can be boiled to make greens, but make sure to boil for an hour or two and change the water at least once. It is

crucial that marsh marigolds are not eaten raw. They contain poisonous glucoside that is expelled during boiling.

#### MILK-WEED

Milk-weed is usually found from late spring and through summer in dry, open soil along roadsides, fences, and fields. It cab be used as a cooked vegetable, potherb, sugar, and to make chewing-gum. Young leaves can be washed and the prepared like spinach. The shoots can be prepared like asparagus after rubbing them in your hands to remove

their wool. The seed-pods can be boiled and served with meat, or boiled in salted water, with a little soda, and then canned.

#### **MUSTARD**

Mustards are found in cultivated areas and in waste lands. When they are young they are popular as potherbs. To rid any bitterness the plant can be boiled in two waters.

Some mustard species' leaves can be used in salad. The seeds produce the powdered mustered used for seasoning. The roots can be pounded into pulp for meat garnish. Mustard also helps in digestion.

# **PERSIMMONS**

Persimmons are a fruit that grows from trees that vary greatly in appearance, and grow wild in some states. They can be used to make jam, jelly, vinegar, beer, tea, a coffee substance and breadstuff. They should be gathered after the first frost when they are completely ripe and very soft. Persimmons can be eaten raw, seeds can be roasted and used for coffee, and dried fruits can be ground into meal to make bread. The fruit also can make a delicious syrup. To make the syrup, mix

the persimmons with wheat bran, baked in pones. Put the mix in a container and pour water into it and let stand for 12 hours. Lastly,

strain then boil to a thicker consistency.

#### PRICKLY PEAR

This plant bears delicious fruit in the south and can be found in sandy, dry and rocky soils. It looks like a cactus and the surface is covered with tufts of red brown tiny barbed bristles. The flowers are yellow with red centers. The parched seeds can be pulverized to make a soup thickening agent. The thick branches can be roasted in hot

ashes and peeled to make a edible pulp.

### **ROSE FAMILY**

Any plant from this family is edible. This includes blackberries, cloudberries, crab-apples, dewberries, raspberries, salmonberries, and thimbleberries. Many can be eaten raw and they also make good jams and jellies. They have green stems with dark green leaves They can grow upright and in trailing bushes. They usually flower and then produce sweet juicy fruit.

#### **SQUAW ROOT**

Squaw root is found in the Pacific states along the edges of woods and in meadows. The plant can grow up to four feet tall, with sparse small leaves and tiny white

or pink flowers. It can be prepared by roasting, boiling, or baking.

#### THISTLES

Thistles have spiny tipped leaves and a red purple flower, and are found in fields across the United States. They can be used as potherb and in salads. Make sure to clip the spines off of the leaves before putting them in a salad. The roots can also be cooked and eaten too. A good way to prepare thistles is to first clip of the leaves, then peal off the shreedy rind, cut up what's left and boil in salty water for five minutes or longer.

### **VIOLET**

Violets have leaves and flowers that are edible and they can also be used to thicken soup. Young leaves can be used in salads, and the flowers can be used in jams. They can be used to thicken soups and may be added to wild okra and lamb's quarter.

# WILD GARLIC

This plant can be easily recognized by it's potent and prevailing smell in rich meadows and alluvial woods in a variety of climatic conditions. It is used as a potherb, to treat wounds, to ease and prevent colds, and as a natural antibiotic. The bulbs are best tasting in the autumn or early spring, bulbettes are best in May or June, and young leaves used for seasoning are best picked in the early summer.

#### WILD RICE

Wild rice can be found in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, the Great Lakes area, and the upper Mississippian region. It is a broad-leaved grass that grows in water. It has broom like flower clusters with pollen carrying flowers ontop and seed-bearing flowers on the bottom of the cluster. It must be harvested by boat. Once harvested it should be spread out and must be stirred as it sweats dry. Then put the rice over fire and stir, leaving the rice there until it is roasted. If you cannot roast it, put it in a place to dry and then thresh it. To thresh the rice you stomp on it with your feet.

#### WILD ONION

This plant is found in prairies, dry meadows, woodlands, and rocky slopes, and is easily identified by it's smell. It can also be recognized by it's white bellshaped flower atop a three to four inch stem. Pick the onion before flowering, strip the outer coats, trim the

wilted leaves and then boil in salted water. The onion can also be used to season meats and other foods.