Adventurer's MK

WILD EDIBLES

As with all foraging if you can't positively identify it – don't eat it.

Edibility of Plants

Plants are valuable sources of food because they are widely available, easily procured, and, in the proper combinations, can meet all your nutritional needs. Remember, eating large portions of plant food on an empty stomach may cause diarrhoea, nausea, or cramps. Two good examples of this are such familiar foods as green apples and wild onions. Even after testing plant food and finding it safe, eat it in moderation. Wild edibles can often be used to complement our everyday foods such as soups, salads,

Basic Do's and Dont's

- **Do** make sure that you are certain of your identification of a plant before eating.
- **Do** only collect the best examples of the plant.
- **Do** Start with a small amount, incase you are sensitive to the plant
- **Do** Wash plant material before eating or cooking.
- **Do Not** collect from areas that may have been sprayed with pesticide
- **Do Not** collect from the sides of busy roads
- **Do Not** over collect from a single plant, we want the plant to recover quickly
- **Do Not** over collect an area
- **Do Not** collect more than you need

Preparation of Plant Food

Although some plants or plant parts are edible raw, you must cook others to be edible or palatable. Edible means that a plant or food will provide you with necessary nutrients, while palatable means that it actually is pleasing to eat. Many wild plants are edible but barely palatable. It is a good idea to learn to identify, prepare, and eat wild foods. Methods used to improve the taste of plant food include soaking, boiling, cooking, or leaching. Leaching is done by crushing the food (for example, acorns), placing it in a strainer, and pouring boiling water through it or immersing it in running water. Boil leaves, stems, and buds until tender, changing the water, if necessary, to remove any bitterness. Boil, bake, or roast tubers and roots.

Plants for Medicine

In a survival situation you will have to use what is available. In using plants and other natural remedies, positive identification of the plants involved is as critical as in using them for food. Proper use of these plants is equally important.

Plants can be your ally as long as you use them cautiously. The key to the safe use of plants is positive identification whether you use them as food or medicine or in constructing shelters or equipment.

Wood Sorrel

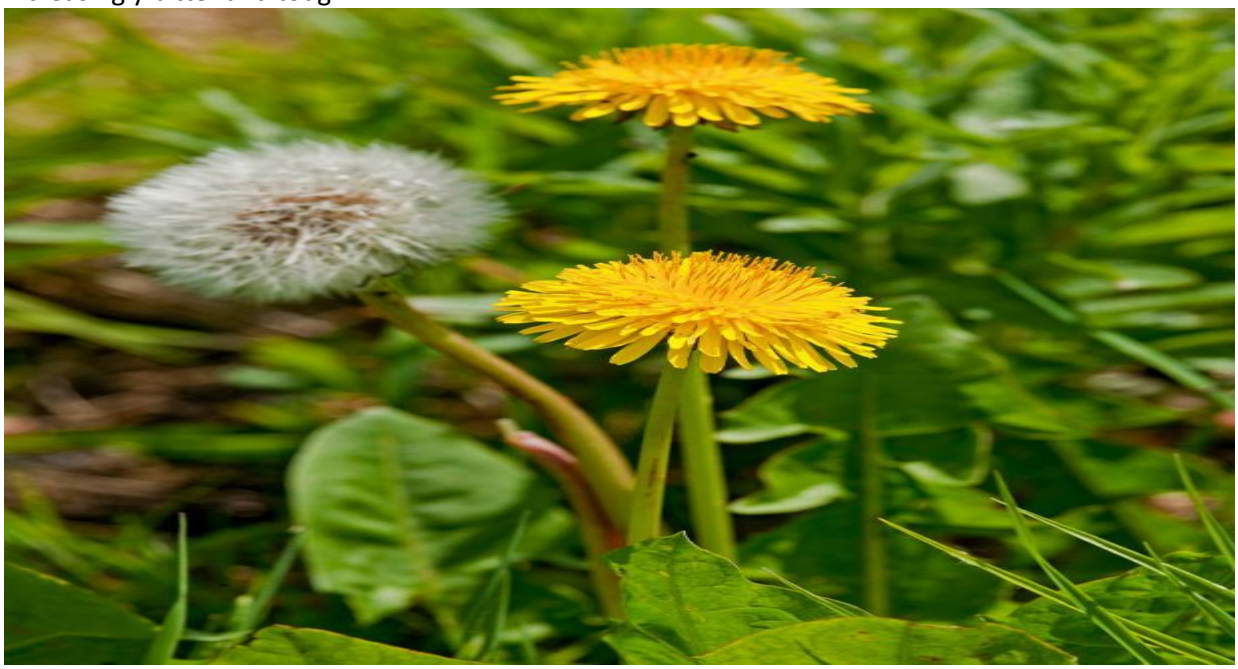
Tastes like apple peel and is a great addition to any salad.

Found in shady areas, like woodland this is very common and easy to identify because of its three equal and heart-shaped leaves which are held at the top of a long stalk which may droop and close up at night.

The distinctive sour taste of sorrel is due to oxalic acid. Older sorrel leaves have a higher oxalic acid content, so they will be better for cooking than eating raw. ... Not only is sorrel good to eat, it also has medicinal properties

Dandelion

Dandelions are good for digestion and may ease rheumatism or liver problems. They can be eaten whole or divided up. Young dandelion greens can be tossed in salads and young leaves can be cooked like spinach. Leaves should be gathered before the plant blooms as they will become increasingly bitter and tough.



Ramsons (wild garlic)
Every part of the plant is edible, from the bulb to the flowers.
Young leaves are delicious added to soups, sauces and pesto. Leaves appear in March and are best picked when young. The flowers emerge from April to June and can add a potent garlic punch to salads and sandwiches. The leaves can boiled and the resulting liquid used as a disinfectant.

Goosegrass
The leaves and stems of the plant can be cooked as a leaf vegetable if gathered before the fruits appear. However, the numerous small hooks which cover the plant make it less palatable if eaten raw- so whilst it tastes sweet and akin to peas it's best cooked as this melts the small hairs.

Stinging Nettles
Gloves recommended for picking. Very tasty, high in vitamins. Medicinal properties have been known for hundreds of years and treats painful muscles, dandruff, eczema, arthritis, gout, urinary problems, insect bites and allergies.
Steam stinging nettle on top of your veggie stir fry or mix in as you would spinach. Stinging nettle can substitute for spinach in any cooked recipe (they lose their sting when cooked). You can add them to lasagna, make pasta with them, throw them in soups or stews

Garlic Mustard (Jack by the Hedge)
Sometimes out as early as February, easy to spot and nice tasting Jack by the hedge is a great wild food. Tasting like spicy garlic it can be used in a salad or to flavour other foods. Said to help asthma, rheumatism and gout it is also very nutritious.

Rosehips
Ripening in late summer, these fruits of the wild rose provide a nutritious feast for fruit-eating birds, deer, rabbits, squirrels and other foragers, while in winter they provide a colourful spash of vermillion. Rosehips were often included in jams, jellies, soups and stews and rosehip syrup is a popular source of vitamin C, and is even said to keep colds at bay.

Greater Plantain
Really, really common. Grows between the slabs of every neglected patio and path in Britain. Quite tough unless cooked but very high in vitamins. The astringent, antibacterial and anti-inflammatory effect of the plant makes it helpful in treating minor wounds. Also treats asthma and is good for digestive problems.

Blackberries
I would have though this one needed no introduction, but have been amazed by the people who don't know it! Grows everywhere, almost literally. Large amounts can be collected in a short time and they store well when frozen or made into jam. Put them in smoothies. Loaded with anti-oxidants, high in fibre with huge amounts of vitamins and minerals, these fruits have been shown to have anti-cancer properties.

Raspberries
Unsurpassed in flavour, these are a personal favourite of mine. Very expensive per 100grams in the shops, yet able to be easily picked in large quantities in the wild. Astonishing health-wise, compounds in raspberries encourage cancer cell death and help prevent cells turning cancerous in the first place.

Elderberries
Very distinctive and very fast to pick, make these a excellent wild food. If they are to be eaten in any quantity then they should be cooked as they contain a cyanide like chemical. Often they are made into wine. Anti-inflamatory, anti viral-and anti-cancer. Packed with vitamins and minerals and ranks 3rd in the world for vitamin C content.

Wild Strawberries
In our opinion, you haven't tasted a strawberry until you have tasted a wild strawberry. They are very small but don't be fooled, the punch they pack in terms of flavour is incomparable. Difficult to pick in quantity. Besides the usual anti-cancer, high vitamin content, wild strawberries also contain potential neurological disease-fighting and anti-aging compounds. Their free radical-zapping antioxidant activity is outstanding, as are their blood glucose-leveling abilities.

Wild cherry
Every part of the wild cherry tree is poisonous except for the fruit. Stones must be removed as they contain cyanide. That said, wild cherries make excellent eating, that is if you can get there before the birds do!

Bilberry
Very common on our windswept moors and mountains, bilberries bushes like well drained acidic soil. Fantastically flavoursome, reminding us of blueberries. Relatively easy to pick them in usable amounts. Phenomenally medicinal, its benefits are too many to name here.

Sloe

Many people pick sloes every year and I bet that 99% of them end up in a bottle of gin. With good reason too as they taste awful when raw, but there is far more to sloes than a flavouring for your tipple. Sloes cleanse the blood, improve digestion and are known to improve kidney and bladder problems. Stones should be removed as they contain cyanide.

Rosehip

Very distinctive – unmistakable in fact, bright red berries that, unpicked, will remain on the bush all winter. Every child knows rosehips as the seeds can be used as itching powder, however the older generation will know it as it was likely given to them by their mother for its immune boosting properties. Rosehip contains vast amounts of vitamin C, gram for gram far in excess of oranges, but it doesn't end there. Rosehip helps prevent cancer and chronic disease, lowers cholesterol and is helpful in managing diabetes.

Hawthorn
Rarely eaten today, hawthorn would have played a large part in our ancestors diets. Mashed and left to dry in rolled strips, hawthorn turns into fruit leather without any other ingredients added. This can then be stored for ages, possibly years and remain edible. Far from our first choice when it comes to flavour but the medicinal properties are interesting to say the least – compounds promote the health of the circulatory system, are useful in treating angina, high blood pressure, congestive heart failure and cardiac arrhythmia. It has been found to strengthen the heart and stabilise it against arrhythmias.

Rowan
Once mainly confined to upland, craggy areas but now a very common tree amongst the gardens and parks of Britain. Bright red/orange berries that many mothers tell their kids are poisonous, and to taste them raw, you can probably see why! They taste very sharp and its much better to make them into a jelly, which is traditionally served with venison.

Terms and Definitions

The following terms, and their definitions, are associated with medicinal plant use:

- **Poultice**. The name given to crushed leaves or other plant parts, possibly heated, that you apply to a wound or sore either directly or wrapped in cloth or paper.
- **Infusion** or tisane or tea. The preparation of medicinal herbs for internal or external application. You place a small quantity of a herb in a container, pour hot water over it, and let it steep (covered or uncovered) before use.
- **Decoction**. The extract of a boiled down or simmered herb leaf or root. You add herb leaf or root to water. You bring them to a sustained boil or simmer to draw their chemicals into the water. The average ratio is about 28 to 56 grams (1 to 2 ounces) of herb to 0.5 liter of water.
- **Expressed juice**. Liquids or saps squeezed from plant material and either applied to the wound or made into another medicine.

Specific Remedies

- **Diarrhea**. Drink tea made from the roots of blackberries and their relatives to stop diarrhea. White oak bark and other barks containing tannin are also effective. However, use them with caution when nothing else is available because of possible negative effects on the kidneys. You can also stop diarrhea by eating white clay or campfire ashes. Tea made from cowberry or cranberry or hazel leaves works too.
- **Antihemorrhagics**. Make medications to stop bleeding from plantain leaves, or most effectively from the leaves of the common yarrow or woundwort.
- **Antiseptics.** Use to cleanse wounds, sores, or rashes. You can make them from the expressed juice from wild onion or garlic, or expressed juice from chickweed leaves or the crushed leaves of dock. You can also make antiseptics from a decoction of burdock root, mallow leaves or roots, or white oak bark. All these medications are for external use only.
- **Fevers.** Treat a fever with a tea made from willow bark, an infusion of elder flowers or fruit, linden flower tea, or elm bark decoction.
- **Colds and sore throats.** Treat these illnesses with a decoction made from either plantain leaves or willow bark. You can also use a tea made from burdock roots, mallow or mullein flowers or roots, or mint leaves.
- **Aches, pains, and sprains**. Treat with externally applied poultices of dock, plantain, chickweed, willow bark, garlic, or sorrel. You can also use salves made by mixing the expressed juices of these plants in animal fat or vegetable oils.
- **Itching**. Relieve the itch from insect bites, sunburn, or plant poisoning rashes by applying a poultice of jewelweed or witch hazel leaves. The jewelweed juice will help when applied to poison ivy rashes or insect stings. It works on sunburn as well as aloe vera.
- **Sedatives**. Get help in falling asleep by brewing a tea made from mint leaves or passionflower leaves.
- **Hemorrhoids.** Treat them with external washes from elm bark or oak bark tea, from the expressed juice of plantain leaves, or from a Solomon's seal root decoction.
- **Constipation.** Relieve constipation by drinking decoctions from dandelion leaves, rose hips, or walnut bark. Eating raw daylily flowers will also help.
- **Antifungal washes.** Make a decoction of walnut leaves or oak bark or acorns to treat ringworm and athlete's foot. Apply frequently to the site, alternating with exposure to direct sunlight.

Miscellaneous uses of Plants

- Make dyes from various plants to colour clothing or to camouflage your skin. Usually, you will have to boil the plants to get the best results. Onion skins produce yellow, walnut hulls produce brown, and pokeberries provide a purple dye.

- Make fibres and cordage from plant fibres. Most commonly used are the stems from nettles and milkweeds, yucca plants, and the inner bark of trees like the linden.
- Make fish poison by immersing walnut hulls in a small area of quiet water. This poison makes it impossible for the fish to breathe but doesn't adversely affect their edibility.
- Make tinder for starting fires from cattail fluff, cedar bark, lighter knot wood from pine trees, or hardened sap from resinous wood trees.
- Make insulation by fluffing up female cattail heads or milkweed down.
- Make insect repellents by applying the expressed juice of wild garlic or onion to the skin, by placing sassafras leaves in your shelter, or by burning or smudging cattail seed hair fibres.