

Foraging Wild Edibles Safely and Sustainably

Wild Edibles Preparation and Recipes

Japanese Knotweed stew

Collect Japanese Knotweed shoots, (*Polygonum cuspidatum*), up to 1 foot tall. Chop and place in a pot with a little water. Cook until tender.

Marinated dandelion greens and flowers

Collect dandelion greens, flower buds and flowers (*Taraxacum officinale*). Wash well and chop well. Steam until tender, 3-5 minutes. Marinate in olive oil, balsamic vinegar and tamari or Bragg's. Add lots of fresh chopped garlic and ginger and serve immediately.

Dandelion flower fritters

Collect dandelion flowers (*Taraxacum officinale*). Make a thick pancake-like batter using flour (whole-wheat pastry flour, spelt flour or cornmeal), liquid (milk, soymilk or water) and eggs (optional). Heat the frying pan and add oil when hot. Dip the dandelion flowers in batter, place in pan, and turn when crispy brown. Serve with yogurt, maple syrup, butter or jam, or eat plain.

Dandelion root coffee

Wash and chop dandelion roots (*Taraxacum officinale*). Set chopped roots out on a cookie sheet or screen until dry. Roast roots in the oven at 250 degrees (no higher) for 15-20 minutes until the coffee-like aroma fills the kitchen. Grind the roasted roots like coffee beans. Place in a coffee filter and pour boiling water through the filter. Lighten with milk or soymilk if desired. Note: When dandelion roots are roasted, fructose is created. Those sensitive to sugars may experience a "sugar rush".

Burdock root stir-fry

Dig the root burdock roots (*Arctium* spp.) in the autumn of the first year or in the spring of the second year, when the plant is a rosette of basal leaves and has not yet sent up its stalk. Wash, chop roots and stir-fry with onions, carrot, turnip, garlic and wild ginger.

Pickled burdock (Thanks to Wisdom of the Herbs student Jeanne Stark who found this recipe at www.natureskills.com. Used with permission of John Gallagher.)

Chop burdock root (*Arctium* spp.) into thin slices, enough to fill a pint jar. Put a small amount of water with the roots in the bottom of a pan and steam until soft but still crunchy. Keep the water from the steaming. To make the brine, combine 1/3 C. tamari, 1/3 C. apple cider vinegar, and 1/3 C. of the water the burdock was steamed in, and bring to a boil. Place 3 whole cloves garlic and 4 slices of ginger root in a pint jar, pack in the steamed burdock slices, and cover with the boiling brine. Refrigerate, let sit a few days before eating.

Wood nettle

Collect the tops of wood nettle (*Laportea canadensis*) and steam gently or add to stir-fry. Tops can be collected and eaten throughout the seasons until a hard frost.

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Foraging Wild Edibles Safely and Sustainably cont.

Wild leeks with wild ginger

Collect generous amounts of wild leeks (*Allium tricoccum*) and a few pieces of wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*). Separate the leek bulb from the leaf. Chop and sauté the bulbs first. Then add chopped leek tops and minced wild ginger.

Milkweed shoots, flower, flower buds and small pods

Collect milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*) shoots up to 6 inches tall. Cover shoots with boiling water, boiling for 15 min. with several rapid changes of water -always use boiling water for the changes, as cold water would set the toxins. Flowers, flower buds, and young pods (1 ½ inch or less) may be prepared the same way as shoots or sauté well in oil until tender. Note: Properly prepared milkweed should not taste bitter – bitter in milkweed indicates toxicity.

Principles of Sustainable Wild Harvesting

Harvest plants that are abundant. Look for edible invasive-type plants. Learn about the plant – get to know the life cycle, determine its abundance, observe local plant populations, check United Plant Savers and other lists. Then ask permission of the plant to harvest, and if granted, offer gratitude. Be willing to hear “permission denied”. Build relationship with the plant. Determine how much you can realistically process and use. Harvest where you have permission. Fill in and cover over holes when digging roots. Do not harvest from banks or beside trails. Harvest from clean places. Leave the largest plant, the “grandmother”. Tend the harvesting area like a sacred garden. Participate in the mystery and harmony of Nature.

Rules for Foraging Wild Edibles

Eat only plants that you can positively identify. Never even nibble on an unidentified plant. Know the toxic species and plants that look similar. Research each edible in three to five references. Properly prepare potentially toxic plants. The first time you eat a wild edible that is new to you, eat only a small amount to check for personal intolerance or allergy. Some plants can only be eaten in small quantity. Edibility by animals does not imply the plant is edible for humans. Harvest only the edible part of a plant.

References

Brill, “Wildman” Steve. Identifying and Harvesting Edible and Medicinal Plants
Brown, Tom Jr. Wild Edible and Medicinal Plants
Elliot, Doug. Wild Roots
Gibbons, Euell. Stalking the Wild Asparagus
Kavasch, Barrie. Native Harvest: Recipes and Botanicals of the American Indian
Newcomb, Lawrence. Newcomb’s Wildflower Guide.
Peterson, Lee Allen. Edible Wild Plants.
Thayer, Sam. The Forager’s Harvest
Weed, Susun. Healing Wise

Resources

United Plant Savers, P.O. Box 400, East Barre, VT 05649
802-479-9825 plants@uniterplantsavers.org ~ www.unitedplantsavers.org

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