

FORAGING ST. LOUIS
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Why eat wild plants?

They are free – no labor, no weeding, no watering...

They are nutritious – many wild plants contain more vitamins than domestic veggies

It is fun to collect!

“Edible wild plants are endowed with one or more parts that can be used for food if gathered at the appropriate stage of growth and properly prepared.” (Kallas 2010:35)

Know your plant! Be SURE it is the right one. If you aren't absolutely, positively, 100% sure it is the right plant, **DON'T EAT IT!!!** Be aware of look-alikes, and double check identity with more than one source. Don't assume all plants from the same family are edible. Don't assume that all parts of the same plant are edible. For example, elderberry flowers and berries are edible, but the rest of the plant is poisonous.

It's a bad idea to sample a plant to check for edibility.

Use plants at the right stage of maturity. For example, pokeweed becomes poisonous as it gets older. Sometimes the best stage of growth for identification is not the same as the best stage for eating. You can always mark a plant in one season and return in another to eat it...

Know how to prepare a plant properly. Some plants must be cooked, or must be boiled in a change of water, or processed in some way. For example, acorns must have tannins leached out of them to be tasty.

Eat in moderation. Sample one thing at a time in small amounts. Individuals have different food sensitivities and it is hard to tell how your body will react to a new food.

Think about where the plant is growing...is there a good chance it has pesticides or toxins from exhaust on it? Watch out for poison ivy.

Ethics and Conservation

Do not collect large amounts of plants not common to the area, and don't collect threatened and endangered species at all.

Dig roots sparingly unless they reproduce more abundantly when dug. Replant bits of rhizomes and roots.

Respect property rights.

Check regulations on public lands. Most state parks and conservation areas allow collection of nuts, berries, and greens, but only for your own consumption (some won't let you take them out of the park, but you can eat what you want on the spot).

Try growing your own if they are natives. Many of the edible plants we will talk about will grow (and may already be growing) in disturbed soil like that of lawns and backyard gardens...so you can weed and gather wild edibles at the same time.

FORAGING RESOURCE LIST:

IDENTIFICATION GUIDES:

Phillips, Jan (1998) Wild Edibles of Missouri. The Conservation Commission of Missouri, Jefferson City. Also available free online at: <http://mdc4.mdc.mo.gov/applications/MDCLibrary/MDCLibrary2.aspx?NodeID=1995>

Peterson, Lee Allen (1977) Edible Wild Plants of Eastern/Central North America. Houghton Mifflin Co., New York.

HOW-TO GUIDES:

Thayer, Samuel (2006) The Forager's Harvest: A Guide to Identifying, Harvesting, and Preparing Edible Wild Plants. Forager's Harvest, Ogema.

Thayer, Samuel (2010) Nature's Garden: A Guide to Identifying, Harvesting and Preparing Edible Wild Plants. Forager's Harvest, Ogema.

Steve Brill with Evelyn Dean (1994) Identifying and Harvesting Edible and Medicinal Plants in Wild (and Not So Wild) Places. Harper Collins, New York.

John Kallas (2010) Edible Wild Plants: Wild Foods from Dirt to Plate. Gibbs Smith, Layton.

Lyle, Katie Letcher (2004) The Complete Guide to Edible Wild Plants, Mushrooms, Fruits and Nuts: How to Find, Identify and Cook Them. The Lyons Press, Guilford.

Duffy, Kevin F. (2004) Harvesting Nature's Bounty: A Guidebook of Wild Edibles, Medicinal and Utilitarian Plants, Survival and Nature Lore. Bookman Publishing and Marketing.

RECIPES:

Young, Kay (1993) Wild Seasons: Gathering and Cooking Wild Plants of the Great Plains. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln.

Brill, Steve (2010) The Wild Vegan Cookbook: A Forager's Culinary Guide to Preparing and Savoring Wild Natural Foods. Harvard Common Press, Harvard.

Armstrong, Patricia K. (1997) Wild Plant Family Cookbook. Prairie Sun Consultants, Naperville.

Berglund, Berndt and Clare E. Bolsby (1971) The Edible Wild: A Complete Cookbook and Guide to Edible Wild Plants in Canada and North America. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

Gaertner, Erika E. (1995) Reap without Sowing: Wild Food from Nature's Cornucopia. General Store Publishing House, Burnstown.

Kentucky State University Cooperative Extension Program. Cooking with Pawpaws. Available online at : <http://www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/ksu-pawpaw/cooking.html>

MUSHROOMS:

Stone, Maxine (2010) Missouri's Wild Mushrooms: A Guide to Hunting, Identifying and Cooking the State's Most Common Mushrooms. Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri, Jefferson City.

McFarland, Joe and Gregory M. Mueller (2009) Edible Wild Mushrooms of Illinois & Surrounding States: A Field-to-Kitchen Guide. University of Illinois Press, Urbana.