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Edible Wild Plants

Pathfinder Honor Seminar



Presented by
Korey A. Chisholm – Instructor



Investiture Achievement Connection:

This Honor is related to the Investiture Achievement requirements for **FRONTIER VOYAGER** Nature Study which require (as one of two options) "Identify, prepare and eat 10 varieties of edible wild plants" which is a good start on Requirement 3 of this Honor. This Honor is a popular choice for the Level 2 or 3 Nature Honor required of **FRONTIER VOYAGER**.



Edible Wild and Bible

From Genesis to Revelation plants are mentioned as a blessing from God for medicine and food.

**And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.
(Genesis 1:29)**

It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat field plants Genesis 3:18

EDIBLE WILD AND BIBLE

Mulberry - 2 Samuel
5:23-24

Hamlock - Amos 6:12

Chicory - Numbers 9:9

**Where did Elijah hide
from Jezbel (1st
kings 19:5)**



1. Photograph, collect pictures of or sketch fifteen edible wild plants. Identify each plant in the wild.



SIMPLE LEAF SHAPES



Elliptical



Heart-shaped



Rounded



Oval

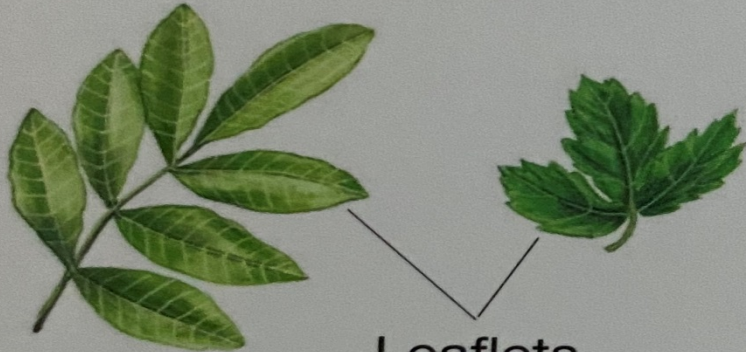


Lobed



Lance-shaped

COMPOUND LEAVES



Leaflets

LEAF ARRANGEMENTS



Alternate



Opposite



Whorled

FLOWER SHAPES



Bell



Cross



Trumpet



Ray Flower



Two-lipped



Iris



Pea-shaped

Stems & Leaves



Shoots

Includes cattail, wild asparagus, and thistle.



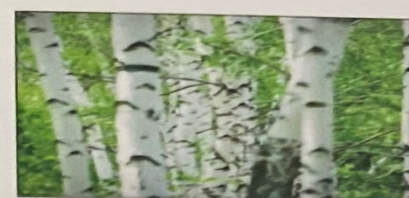
Leaves

Includes dandelion, dock, amaranth, plantain, onion, chicory, sorrel and lamb's quarter.



Pith

Growth inside plant stem is edible in cattails, thistle and burdock.



Cambium

Inner layer between the bark and the wood is edible in many conifers, birch, poplar, aspen.

Nuts & Seeds



Acorns



Wild Sunflower



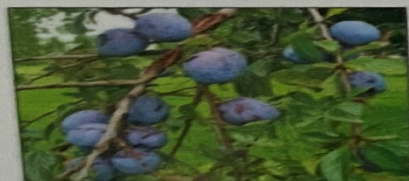
Hazelnuts



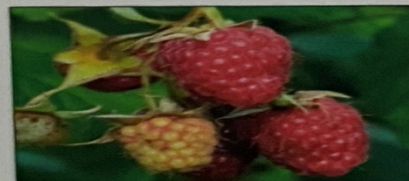
Pine Nuts

Small seed kernels are located under cone scales.

Fruits & Berries



Wild Plum



Wild Red Raspberry



Rose Hips



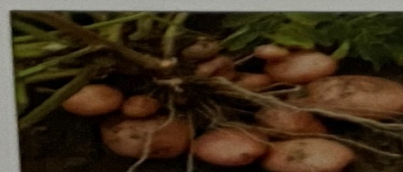
Elderberry

Roots & Tubers



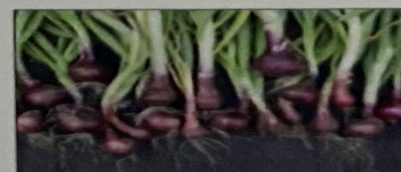
Taproot

Straight tapering root that grows downward.



Tuber

An enlarged plant root.



Bulb

An enlarged fleshy root of modified leaves.



Rhizome

A plant stem that sends out roots from its nodes



Cattail

In early spring, the shoots and stalks can be pulled up and eaten raw or boiled for 15 minutes. In late spring, the spikes can be gathered just before they break out of their papery sheaths, boiled for a few minutes, buttered, and eaten like corn-on-the-cob. The pollen can be used as flour when mixed half and half with wheat flour.



Chicory

The roots are washed, roasted, ground, and brewed as a coffee substitute (use 1.5 tsp per cup of water). In the spring the white, underground portion of the leaves are an excellent addition to salads, and the green above-ground portions can be boiled and eaten as potherb's/greens.

Clover



The flowers can be eaten raw, added to salads, boiled in soups, or dried (or roasted) and ground to flour. They can also be used to make fritters. Red clover is shown here, but white clover is just as good (but a little smaller, so it takes more work to collect). The leaves and stems are also edible in salads or as greens.

Alsike clover
Trifolium hybridum

Red clover
Trifolium pratense

White clover
Trifolium repens

Leaflets



No crescent "V"
Finely serrated, sharp toothed
Hairless



Light crescent "V"
Hairy
Finely toothed to toothless



Commonly w/ white crescent "V"
Finely toothed
Hairless

Flowers



White to pink flowers



Rose-purplish flowers
Rise from a vertical stem



White to dirty pink flowers rise
from a horizontal stem

Plant Height



12 - 24 in
(30.5 - 61 cm)



6 - 36 in
(15.2 - 91.4 cm)



3 - 6 in
(7.6 - 15.2 cm)

Dandelion



Add the young, tender leaves to salad raw, or boil and eat as greens. The roots can be roasted and ground, and used as a coffee substitute. The yellow rays of the flowers are sweet and make a great snack raw, or they can be fried as fritters. The unopened buds are also excellent and can be used the same way as the leaves.

Pickerelweed



The young leaves, if picked before they unfurl can be eaten raw in salads or boiled for ten minutes and served with butter as greens. The nut-like fruit can be gathered in late summer to early fall and roasted or eaten out of the hand like granola.



Broadleaf Plantain

Crushed leaves can be applied directly to the skin to stop bleeding, bee stings and insect bites. Psyllium seeds are a bulk laxative. The young leaves are delicious raw in salads. In summer and fall the leaves can be eaten when boiled as greens.



Narrow- Leaf Plantain

The leaves, shoots, and seeds are edible. They are less bitter to eat raw when they are young, yet at any stage the plantain can be boiled or stir fried. A tea can be consumed to alleviate lung issues. Chewed leaves can be applied on the skin to soothe bug bites.



Wild Carrot (Queen Anne's Lace)

The roots of the wild carrot can be cleaned and used as regular carrots. They are quite a bit smaller than domestic carrots, but the flavor is unmistakable. It is best to use the roots of the plant during its first year.



Lambsquarters



This plant is also known as wild spinach due to the mild spinach flavor it contains. According to John Kallas in Edible Wild Plants, lambsquarters have more fiber, calcium, zinc, copper, manganese, riboflavin, and vitamins A and C than domesticated spinach. It can be eaten in all the same ways as regular spinach. There are two ways to distinguish wild spinach from its poisonous look-alike, hairy nightshade. The flowers of hairy nightshade are white with a yellow center while those of lambsquarters are green and not very noticeable. Wild spinach leaves are waterproof due to a waxy powder coating. As the name suggests, the leaves of hairy nightshade are covered in hairs.

Cinquefoil

The name of cinquefoil means “five-leaves” and provides a clue to this plant’s identification. It can be eaten and used as medicine. The young shoots and leaves can be eaten raw in a salad, or cooked as a pot herb. The plant is classified as an astringent, tonic, and antiseptic. An infusion from the root can be used to treat thrash, dysentery, and diarrhea. The liquid can be gargled to remedy loose teeth and gum disease. Decoctions from cinquefoil can treat infections, rashes, sores, and irritated skin. Bleeding can be stopped with the powdered or crushed root. This herb is also included in some anti-wrinkle cosmetic products. The Essential Health website notes the effective use of cinquefoil to aid in infertility and pregnancy issues.



Mullein



Mullein is a soft (almost velvet-like) biennial that can grow very tall. This dicotyledonous plant produces a rosette of leaves in its first year of growth. The second year plant normally produces a single unbranched stem. The tall pole-like stem ends at a dense spike of yellow flowers. It is a common wild edible plant that spreads by prolifically producing seeds. Depending on the summer weather conditions, this wild edible may not produce a lot of flowers. All parts of this plant are covered with star-shaped trichomes. As its other name implies, mullein leaves were once used as toilet paper. **Distinguishing Features:** Mullein in its second year is a tall, erect stem that can grow very high. **Height:** Mullein can reach heights of just over 2 metres. **Habitat:** Mullein can be found growing in open fields, waste places, disturbed areas, railway embankments and similar dry sunny localities. **Edible parts:** Leaves and flowers.

Although the leaves and flowers are edible, enjoying a cup of tea made from these parts is generally preferable. Leaves and flowers can be used in a salad.

Wild Food Recipes: [Mullein Tea](#)

Butterfly Weed



Scientific Name *Asclepias tuberosa*

Butterfly weed is a native of Missouri is a tuberous rooted plant that grows easily in average, dry to medium, well-drained soil in full sun. This perennial grows in dry/rocky open woods, glades, prairies, fields and roadside areas. This plant grows in clumps up to 1-3 feet tall which produces a bright orange to yellow- orange flowers with hairy stems and narrow, lanced shape leaves. They bloom from late spring throughout the summer. The flowers are a nectar source for many butterflies and the leaves are a source of food for the monarch butterfly larvae (caterpillars).

Medicinal properties - the root which is commonly called pleurisy is used to treat lung inflammation.

Oriental Bittersweet

Components of the Oriental Bittersweet plant contain antitumor, insecticidal, anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and antioxidant characteristics. This plant can also be used to alleviate toothaches and snake bites. In China, the bark is considered to be a valuable fiber.

When the leaves are young, they can be cooked and eaten.

Although beautiful, the berries of this plant are not edible. They can be used to create wreaths and other decorative arrangements.



Sweet Violet



Both the leaves and flowers of the Sweet Violet plant can be eaten. Historically, it has also been used in cosmetic products, perfumes, and dyes. Since salicylic acid, the base for aspirin, is present in this wild edible, it can be prepared in ointments and poultices to aid bruises. Teas and syrups made from sweet violet can relieve coughs and inflammations that are inside of the body. Pancakes can also be enhanced by a syrup made with the sweet tasting flowers. The flowers are also added to salads as well as made into candy and jelly.

Wild Geranium



Wild Geranium is also known as Cranesbill. All parts of this plant can be used. The leaves and roots should be picked just before the flowers emerge. A large proportion of Vitamin K is found in the seeds. Wild Geranium has astringent, antiseptic, and anti-inflammatory properties. An infusion of the root can be used to soothe ulcers in the mouth and throat infections. Swollen feet can be relieved with the application of a wild geranium poultice.

Greater Celandine



The sap that emerges from the greater celandine plant irritates the skin, yet can be used to alleviate warts and corns. Apart from this use of the plant, it is not considered edible.

Swallow wort, another name for greater celandine, is found throughout the Northeast in areas that have been disturbed or are manmade.

Information

Garlic Mustard



Wildman Steve Brill considers Garlic Mustard to be among the most nutritious of the common edible wild plants. It can be eaten raw in salads or cooked lightly. Cooking for more than five minutes will make the garlic mustard leaves too soft. Once one learns to identify this plant in the wild, it can be eaten with confidence, for there are no poisonous look-alikes to this bitter tasting plant. **Interesting Information:** Garlic Mustard contains an ingredient that lowers point at which water freezes.

Wood Sorrel



Where found: Occurs throughout most of the world, except for the polar areas.

Availability: Spring, Summer, Fall

Use: Use the raw leaves, stems, and flowers as a refreshing, *sour* addition to a **salad**. Steep in boiling water for 10 minutes to make a **tea**.

WARNING: Wood sorrel contains small amount of oxalic acid which gives it its pleasantly sour taste. If eaten in large quantities over a period of time, however, it may inhibit the body's ability to absorb calcium.



Sheep Sorrel



Nibble on the raw leaves - a great addition to a **salad**. They may also be boiled and eaten like **greens**, or steeped to make a **tea**.

WARNING: Sheep sorrel contains small amount of oxalic acid which gives it its pleasantly sour taste. If eaten in large quantities over a period of time, however, it may inhibit the body's ability to absorb calcium.



Cleavers

Cleavers are a food that can be used internally and externally. Consuming cleavers activates the lymphatic system to rid the body of debris and toxins. On the outside of the body it can be applied to relieve skin irritations, cancerous growths, and sunburns. Ulcers and tumors of the mouth are aided by the application of cleaver poultices. Bedstraw is another name used for cleavers. Since geese, farm birds, and livestock enjoy eating this plant it also has the common name of goosegrass. Greens, or potherbs, can be prepared by boiling the tips of this plant for 10-15 minutes. A caffeine-free coffee substitute can be made by roasting cleaver seeds. Due to the fact that this plant sticks to things so well, it has also been used to strain liquids like milk.



Burdock



The burdock plant has a long taproot that is nutritious and can be cooked as a root vegetable. It can be roasted in aluminum foil packets until tender and seasoned with salt or soy sauce. Once the stalks are peeled they can be consumed raw or boiled in salt water. As a medicine, burdock is dried and used to cleanse the blood. The oil extract of this root is called Bur oil. It is used to treat irritations of the scalp. The Swiss inventor, George de Mestral, got the idea to invent Velcro from his observations regarding how the dried flower of the burdock plant attached to his clothes.

Dock



Edible Parts: Because of the tender nature of the foliage, the dock is a useful plant, especially in desert areas. You

can eat their succulent leaves fresh or slightly cooked. To take away the strong taste, change the water once or twice during cooking. This latter tip is a useful hint in preparing many kinds of wild greens.

Wild Strawberry

The fruits can be eaten raw or cooked into jellies and jams. It can also be baked into pies. An herbal tea made from the leaves, stems, and flowers is believed to aid in the treatment of diarrhea.



Wineberry or Asian Raspberry



Wineberry is found from New England and eastern Canada south to North Carolina and west to Michigan and Tennessee. It is considered an invasive plant of natural areas in Maryland, Pennsylvania Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

HABITAT IN THE UNITED STATES: Like other members of *Rubus*, wineberry prefers moist conditions and adequate sunlight. Many species of birds and mammals use the brambles for nesting and shelter.

BACKGROUND: Wineberry was introduced into the United States in 1890 as breeding stock for new *Rubus* cultivars. It is used today by berry breeders to add specific genes to berry varieties or species. Wineberry is an example of one man's flower being another man's weed. Given containment, wineberry has desirable and useful qualities, but due to its invasive nature, it is considered a significant pest of agricultural and natural ecosystems. Wineberry has been used as a virus indicator for raspberry yellow spot and wineberry latent virus and numerous plant viruses have been isolated from it.



Prairie Rose

Description: The rose is a common garden shrub, but it also grows wild in many places. The leaves of most species are 5–15 cm long, pinnate, with 3–13 leaflets and basal stipules; the leaflets usually have a serrated margin, and often a few small prickles on the underside of the stem. The vast majority of roses are deciduous, but a few (particularly in southeast Asia) are evergreen or nearly so. **Where found:** There are more than a hundred species of wild roses, all from the northern hemisphere and mostly from temperate regions.

Availability: Fall **Use:** The fruit of the rose bush (rose hips) are sometimes eaten, mainly for their vitamin C content. They are usually pressed and filtered to make rose-hip **syrup**, as the fine hairs surrounding the seeds are unpleasant to eat (resembling itching powder). They can also be used to make herbal **tea**, **jam**, **jelly** and **marmalade**. They are also used to make **pies** and **bread**.

Brambles: Raspberries, Blackberries, & Dewberries



Bramble is the term given to the collection of wild berries that can be found in the rubus genus of plants. This term is often used due to the fact that it can be difficult to distinguish between raspberries, blackberries, or dewberries in nature. In nature, the plants are often found at the edge of woodlands. The flowers have five white petals which become berries that can be red to black in color. In order to access the juicy berries one has to navigate through the thorns that are found on the stems and branches.

These plants flower in June and July and have edible berries in July and August. In addition to eating the berries raw or cooked, the flowers can be eaten raw and a tea can be made from dry or fresh leaves.

Jewelweed

This plant is used to treat poison ivy and increase the flow of blood in the body. In addition, some take jewelweed to reduce the pain that can occur after childbirth and to counteract fish poisoning. According to the Petersen Field Guide, young jewelweed shoots can be boiled twice, throwing off the water each time, and then eaten as a green or potherb.



Wild Grape



The leaves of this plant can be eaten raw or cooked. They taste like grapes and are often stuffed with rice and other foods in the Mediterranean culture. The grapes themselves are also eaten and can be made into juice.

Do not confuse this plant with common moonseed, all parts of which are very poisonous. The moonseed plant has no tendrils, yet the grape does.



2. Identify in the wild five trees and five shrubs that are edible.

- Trees typically have a **single trunk** and grow taller than shrubs (which often have multiple trunks).
- Shrubs are less than 6 m-10 m (20 ft–33 ft) tall.

Eastern Red Cedar



The Eastern Red Cedar is also known as a Red Juniper. Not only are the blue berries edible for humans, they are a delicacy for many animals. Cones from these trees are used in kidney medicines. Wikipedia states that essential oils extracted from the bark, leaves, and twigs are considered to be toxic and possibly carcinogenic, while Green Deane notes the antiviral attributes of tea made from the berries and leaves. Moths naturally dislike this tree. The wood is durable and resists rot, making it favorable in the construction of furniture and pencils.

Wild Black Cherry Tree



Although edible, the fruit of the Wild Black Cherry Tree does not have a pleasing taste to many when it is eaten raw. A good amount of sugar may be added to balance the tart flavor in jams and pies. It is a delicacy, however, to several creatures including birds, squirrels, and raccoons. The seeds and the leaves contain the poisonous compound called cyanide. If one accidentally swallows a whole wild cherry seed they will not have to worry because the seed has to be broken up in order for the cyanide to be released into the body. If a wild cherry tree falls in an area where livestock are being raised, it has to be removed immediately. Farm animals have died by grazing on the leaves. The bark of the Wild Black Cherry tree is used in herbal medicine as a sedative and to relieve coughs.

Black Birch



The sap, inner bark, and leaves of the black birch are edible. The dark sap extracted from this tree is just half as sweet as that taken from a maple tree. It takes 10 gallons of birch sap to make one pint of syrup. Birch noodles are made by cooking strips of the inner bark. A wintergreen-type tea can be made by infusing birch twigs in water.

Methyl salicylate is a medicine found within the black birch tree. Toxicity occurs when too much of this compound is consumed. The Cherokee culture chewed the leaves to relieve dysentery. They also treated colds by drinking the tea.

Maple Tree



Many people are familiar with the fact that maple syrup comes from the sap of the maple tree. It takes 40 gallons of sap boiled down to produce one gallon of yummy syrup. It is less known, however, that the seeds of the maple are also edible. They can be eaten green or brown, but the brown seeds have to be cooked first. The smaller seeds are reported to taste sweeter. To eat, just peel off the “helicopter” shaped shell. That “helicopter” shaped portion can actually be eaten also. Maple seeds can be eaten raw like sunflower seeds (except the brown ones), boiled, roasted, or dehydrated. After dehydrating, the seeds can be ground into flour.

Oak Tree

Not only the acorns, but the leaves of the oak tree can also be eaten. With that said, although the leaves of the oak are edible, they are not very tasty. Native people all around the world have used acorns in their diets. The tannins contained in acorns necessitate soaking to get rid of this bitter tasting and slightly poisonous component. According to eattheplanet.org, this high calorie food has a mild taste similar to grains and other nuts. After peeling and soaking they can be ground and added to cakes and breads.



Pine Tree

The needles can be eaten year-round. The young shoots can be eaten as candy when stripped of the needles, peeled, boiled until tender, and then simmered for 20-30 minutes in a sugary syrup.



Sassafras is a small tree with brown, furrowed bark. The leaves come in three shapes: an oval (one lobe); a mitten (two lobes); and a glove (three lobes).

Use: dig up the roots, peel them, and boil them to make a rootbeer-like tea.

WARNING: Safrole, which is the main component (75-80%) of sassafras essential oil, is now recognized by the United States Department of Agriculture as a potential carcinogen..

Sassafras Tree





3. Identify, prepare, and eat three kinds of wild berries or fruits, three kinds of beverages, three salad plants, three potherbs (greens), and two tubers or roots.

Barrel cactus, Blackberry, Blueberry,
Crab apple, Elderberry, Gooseberry,
Grape, Hackberry, Mulberry, Oregon
Grape, Partridgeberry, Prickly pear,
Raspberry, Rose hips, Saguaro
cactus, and Wintergreen.



Chicory, Dandelion, Mint, Nettle, Pine
needle, Sassafras, Sheep Sorrel,
Sumac, Wintergreen, and Wood Sorrel



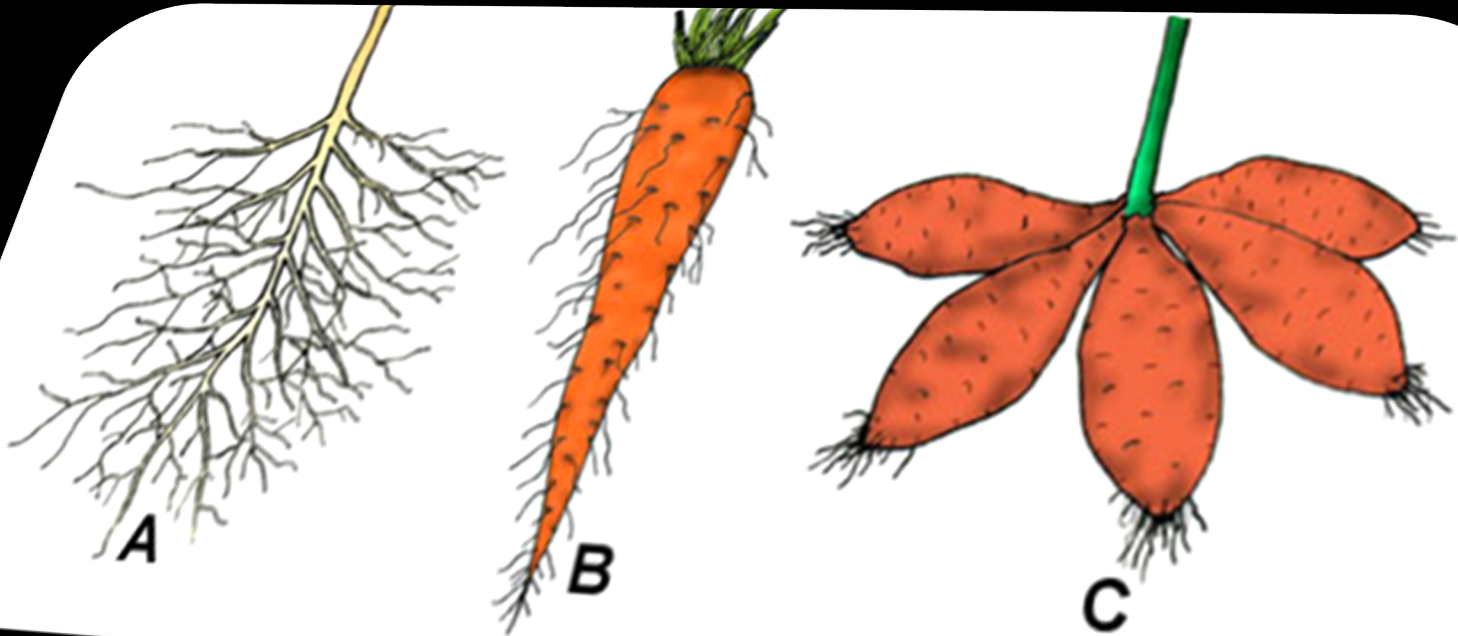
Chickweed, Dandelion, Greenbriar, Lambs' quarters, Miner's lettuce, Plantain, Purslane, Sheep Sorrel, Violet, Wood Sorrel



**Dandelion, Dock, Filaree, Fireweed,
Lambsquarters, Mallow, Milkweed,
Plantain, Russian thistle, Stinging
Nettle, Wood Nettle.**



Burdock, Carrot, Cattail, Dandelion, Evening Primrose and Sassafras





4. Demonstrate the preparation of wild foods in each of the following

ways:

- 1. Frying**
- 2. Boiling**
- 3. Baking**
- 4. Roasting_____**

**Any of the greens and tubers
may be prepared by boiling.**



- **Cattail Pollen & Clover Pancakes**
- **Dandelion & Elderberry flower heads can be dipped in batter and fried to make fritters**



- **Acorns, Chicory, Dandelion, Pickerel weed and Pine nuts**



Pie

Delicious pies can be made from blackberries or blueberries. Wild cherries are not really large enough for this, but if you find them in quantity, you might make a go of it.

Bread

Try baking bread by mixing wheat flour with any of the various "wild" flours made from clover, acorn, cattail pollen, or cattail roots.



**5. Demonstrate how
to prepare four
parts of the
common milkweed
or day lily for food.**



Milkweed must
be boiled in
multiple
changes of
water to
eliminate its
bitterness.





Filling 2 Large pot
of Water bring to a
boil.

Put milkweed and
boil for 1-2 mins.

Repeat this process
no fewer than 6
times





**6. What root plant
can be dried and
ground into
meal?**

**Check pervious
answers for help**



**7. Know at least 8
families
embracing the
poisonous or
doubtful plants.**

- Buttercup family – buttercups, monkshood
- Carrot/parsley family - Water hemlock, Poison hemlock or fool's parsley
- Daisy family : Burdock, Chamomile, Chicory, Dandelion, Pineappleweed, Prickly lettuce, Sow thistle, Thistle, Wild lettuce
- Lily family Day lily, Desert lily,

- Mushrooms - many (not in the plant kingdom)
- Nightshade family - nightshade, tomato (leaves), potato (leaves)
- Poison Sumac/Oak/Ivy family
- Rose family: Blackberry, Raspberry, Rose hips, etc. (fruits) - cherry (leaves, seeds, bark)
- Grape family (Vitaceae) - Virginia creeper



8. The cardinal edibility rule is to never eat any wild plant unless you have positively identified it and know that it is edible. Discuss the importance of this rule.

- **It's not actually enough to know that a plant is edible - you also must know what parts of the plant is edible, and at what stage of its growth it is edible.**
- **Ensure you can positively identify plants.**
- **When is this plant accessible.**



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We would like to thank
Instructor **Korey A. Chisholm** for an
excellent honor presentation! It would
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