

Wood Sorrel (Oxalis app.)



Wood sorrel is a close relative of the garden variety oxalis, but it grows wild in many temperate regions around the world. The leaves, stems, flowers and even the seed pods are all edible, with a flavor that's been described as a cross between lemon and green apple.

The tartness comes from oxalic acid, which gives the plant its scientific name. Just like with spinach, you shouldn't eat too much of it raw.



While the leaves can be a bit too sour to eat in large quantities, they make a great addition to salads, soups, and even desserts. The flowers are also edible, with a milder flavor that's perfect for garnishing dishes. And the seed pods, when young and green, can be eaten raw or cooked.

For centuries, wood sorrel has been used as both a food and a medicine. Native Americans used it to treat scurvy, fevers, and skin infections.

The leaves were also used to make a refreshing tea. In Europe, it was cultivated as an early spring vegetable.

Foragers and chefs are rediscovering its bright, lemony flavour and using it to add a pop of tartness to all kinds of dishes.

So next time you're out in the woods, keep an eye out for those clover-like leaves - you might just find a delicious treat!



5 Wood Sorrel Facts:

- **Close relative of garden oxalis, but grows wild**
- **Leaves, stems, flowers and seed pods are all edible**
- **Leaves have a refreshing, lemony-tart flavour (Don't eat too much)**
- **Used traditionally to treat scurvy, fevers and skin infections**
- **Cultivated in Europe as an early spring vegetable**

5 Wood Sorrel Qualities:

- **Clover-like leaves with three heart-shaped leaflets**
- **Tiny yellow flowers with five petals**
- **Slender, reddish stems that spread along the ground**
- **Seed pods that split open when ripe**
- **Grows in shady, moist areas like forests and gardens**

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)



Yarrow gets its scientific name from the Greek hero Achilles, who was said to have used it to treat the wounds of his soldiers during the Trojan War.

The plant's ability to stop bleeding and promote healing comes from compounds like achilleine and flavonoids. Yarrow has been used topically and internally for centuries to treat wounds, fevers, digestive issues and more.



But yarrow's virtues don't stop there. The leaves and flowers are edible, with a flavor that's been described as a mix of parsley and black pepper. They can be added to salads, soups and stews for a nutritional boost. Yarrow tea is a traditional remedy for colds and flu, while the essential oil has antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties.

I find their leaves to be the most distinguishing feature of the Yarrow plant.



For indigenous groups across North America, Europe and Asia, yarrow was a revered medicinal plant. The Navajo used it to treat headaches and stomachaches, while the Cherokee made a tea for fevers. The Iroquois even used it as a love charm! Yarrow was also used to make yellow and green dyes.

Yarrow is still prized by herbalists and home gardeners. The flowers attract beneficial insects like ladybugs and lacewings, making it a great companion plant. And the plant's ability to grow in poor, dry soils makes it a hardy addition to any garden.



5 Yarrow Facts:

- **Named after the Greek hero Achilles**
- **Used topically and internally to stop bleeding and promote healing**
- **Leaves and flowers are edible with a parsley-pepper flavor**
- **Used traditionally as a medicinal plant by many cultures**
- **Attracts beneficial insects like ladybugs and lacewings**

5 Yarrow Qualities:

- **Clusters of tiny white or pink flowers on tall stems**
- **Finely divided, feathery green leaves**
- **Grows 1-3 feet tall in sunny, well-drained areas**
- **Stems are often reddish or purplish in color**
- **Leaves have a distinctive aromatic scent when crushed**

Fireweed

(*Chamerion angustifolium*)



Fireweed gets its common name from its ability to rapidly colonize areas that have been disrupted by forest fires, logging or other disturbances.

It's often one of the first plants to emerge and reclaim the scorched earth. The seeds can lie dormant in the soil for decades until exposed to newly available sunlight and nutrients released by the fire.



But fireweed doesn't just thrive in burn areas - you'll find it growing vigorously along trails, roads, streams and anywhere else the ground has been upturned. With its deep taproots helping to stabilize soil, this pioneer plant plays an important role in ecological recovery.

For indigenous groups across the Pacific Northwest, fireweed was much more than just a pretty wildflower. It was a versatile food and medicinal plant.

The young shoots and leaves can be boiled and eaten like vegetables, while the flower spikes make a richly coloured herbal tea high in vitamin C. Even the fluffy seed plumes were used as natural tinder to carry fire from place to place.



Next time you spot those bright fuchsia blooms lighting up the landscape, pause and appreciate the resilience and usefulness of this remarkable wildflower. Fireweed is living proof that beauty and toughness can go hand-in-hand in nature.



5 Fireweed Facts:

- **Member of the evening primrose family Onagraceae**
- **One of the first plants to colonize after forest fires**
- **All parts are edible - shoots, leaves, flowers, seeds**
- **Flowers bloom sequentially from bottom to top over 5-6 weeks**
- **Fluffy seed plumes used as tinder by indigenous peoples**

Fireweed Qualities:

- **Vibrant fuchsia/magenta flower spikes up to 1m tall**
- **Tall, erect stems covered in fine white hairs**
- **Lance-shaped, veined green leaves**
- **Fluffy white seed plumes resembling cotton**
- **Deep, robust taproot system**

Miner's Lettuce

(*Claytonia perfoliata*)



A distinctly shaped, edible plant. One of my favourites.

As the name suggests, miner's lettuce earned a special place in the diets of the gold miners in the American West during the 1800s.

After a long winter eating preserved foods, these hardy greens were one of the first fresh vegetables available in early spring, providing a welcome boost of vitamin C. The miners avidly collected the leaves to add to soups and stews or just eat them raw in salads.



But appreciation for this wild edible dates back much further to Native American tribes across western North America. They had been harvesting miner's lettuce for generations, recognizing its nutritional value and pleasant mild flavor reminiscent of spinach or green peas.



So keep an eye out for these little green saucer leaves on your next spring ramble. You may just discover a tasty new addition to your salad bowl!



5 Miner's Lettuce Facts:

- Also known as winter purslane, Indian lettuce or spring beauty**
- One of the first edible greens available in early spring**
- High in vitamin C, vitamin A, and omega-3s**
- Can produce edible small white/pink flowers**
- Leaves taste best before the plant flowers**

5 Miner's Lettuce Qualities:

- **Low-growing rosettes of bright green, fleshy leaves**
- **Circular or saucer-shaped leaves around central stem**
- **Reddish tinge on leaf undersides and stems**
- **Small white and/or pink flowers with 5 petals**
- **Tender, succulent texture with mild flavour**

Broad-Leaved Plantain (Plantago Major)



This hardy perennial has been around for thousands of years, traveling along the routes of human migration and planting its flat rosettes across the globe.

In fact, the broad leaves were one of the earliest herbal remedies employed by ancient Greeks, Romans, Native Americans and traditional healers on every continent.



Plantain has well-earned its role as a staple of folk medicine. The leaves are a rich source of vitamins and minerals like vitamin C, calcium and zinc. They can be crushed and applied as a poultice to soothe insect bites, rashes and minor cuts and burns. Or the fresh or dried leaves can be steeped into a nutritious tea. But plantain's usefulness doesn't stop there. The young tender leaves make a tasty addition to salads, similar to their relative dandelion greens.



And the seed heads produce a soothing mucilage that can be used to treat coughs and sore throats.

5 Plantain Facts:

- One of the most widely distributed plants in the world**
- Leaves have been used medicinally for over 3,500 years**
- Seeds can remain viable in soil for nearly 60 years**
- Also known as "white man's footprint" for following colonization**
- Both leaves and seeds are edible when young and tender**

5 Plantain Qualities:

- **Low-growing rosettes of broad, oval green leaves**
- **Leaves are ribbed with parallel veins**
- **Tall seed spikes with cylindrical brown seed heads**
- **Fibrous roots that run shallow but spread widely**
- **Thrives in compacted soils and disturbed areas**

Chickweed (*Stellaria media*)



Chickweed is an incredibly hardy cool-season annual that has been utilized for centuries as a nutritious foraged green. The leaves, stems and dainty white flowers are all edible raw or cooked.

With a fresh, mild flavor, chickweed makes a nutritious addition to salads, pestos, and smoothies packed with vitamins A, C and beneficial omega-3 fatty acids.



But this plant's usefulness extends far beyond the kitchen. Chickweed has an impressive history of herbal applications dating back to ancient Greece. The leaves can be crushed and applied as a poultice to soothe rashes, insect bites, cuts and other skin irritations thanks to its soothing, anti-inflammatory properties.



Fans of chickweed appreciate its ability to thrive and self-sow readily in gardens and disturbed areas. As a soil-cooling ground-cover, it helps retain moisture and provides a cozy habitat for earthworms and other beneficial creatures. Plus, the dainty blooms offer an early spring nectar source for pollinators.



5 Chickweed Facts:

- **One of the earliest plants to green up in spring**
- **Edible from root to flower when young and tender**
- **Used as a food crop by Native American tribes**
- **Helps improve soil fertility as a nutrient accumulator**
- **Attracts beneficial insects like ladybugs and lacewings**

5 Chickweed Qualities:

- **Low-growing, sprawling mats of thin green stems**
- **Oval or egg-shaped leaves with pointed tips**
- **Dainty 5-petaled white flowers with deeply notched petals**
- **Fibrous roots that spread rapidly near the surface**
- **Soft, tender, succulent texture when young**

Pineapple Weed (*Matricaria discoidea*)



A low-growing plant with finely dissected green leaves and a distinctly fruity aroma. Despite its weedy appearance, this little plant has some surprisingly delightful qualities.

As the name suggests, pineapple weed releases a sweet, tropical scent reminiscent of pineapple when its leaves are crushed or the plant is dried. This comes from terpene compounds like camphene that give the plant its distinctive fragrance.



But the appeal of pineapple weed goes beyond just its aroma. The leaves and flowers are edible, with a parsley-like flavor that makes a nice addition to salads, pestos, or herb butters. It has also found use as a medicinal herb to treat indigestion, fever, and muscle pain.



For centuries, indigenous groups across North America utilized this unassuming plant as both food and medicine. The Navajo chewed the leaves for toothaches, while the Iroquois used it as a digestive aid after big meals.



5 Pineapple Weed Facts:

- Also known as wild chamomile or dillweed**
- Member of the Asteraceae (sunflower) family**
- Leaves and flowers are edible with parsley-like flavor**
- Has traditional medicinal uses for various tribes**
- Thrives in compacted soils and disturbed areas**

5 Pineapple Weed Qualities:

- Low-growing plant with finely dissected green leaves**
- Distinctive pineapple-like aroma when crushed**
- Yellow-green button-like flower heads**
- Fibrous roots that spread rapidly near the surface**
- Feathery, fern-like overall appearance**

Stinging Nettle **(*Urtica dioica*)**



**Have you ever brushed up against
a tall, green plant with serrated
leaves and felt a stinging
sensation? That prickly plant is
probably stinging nettle.**

While it may seem like an unpleasant weed, nettle is actually a nutritional powerhouse with a long history of medicinal and culinary uses.



Stinging nettle gets its name from the tiny needle-like hairs on its leaves and stems that inject histamine, acetylcholine and other chemicals when touched, causing a stinging or itching sensation. But don't let that deter you - cooking or drying the plant removes the sting, revealing a nutritional profile that puts many cultivated greens to shame.



Nettle leaves are packed with vitamins A, C, K and B-complex, as well as minerals like iron, calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium and sodium. They also contain beneficial plant compounds like carotenoids, flavonoids, and polyphenols. No wonder it's been used as a tonic and restorative herb for centuries!

For indigenous groups across North America, Europe and Asia, nettle was a valued food and medicine.

The young spring shoots were eaten as a vegetable, while the leaves were dried and used to make a nutritious tea. Nettle was also used topically to treat joint pain, eczema and arthritis.



The leaves can be cooked like spinach, added to soups and stews, or dried and encapsulated for supplements. The seeds are even being explored as a sustainable source of omega-3

5 Stinging Nettle Facts:

- Leaves and stems are covered in tiny needle-like hairs that sting**
- Packed with vitamins, minerals and beneficial plant compounds**
- Used traditionally as a food, medicine and textile fiber**
- Grows prolifically in disturbed, nitrogen-rich soils**
- Provides food and habitat for many butterfly and moth species**

5 Stinging Nettle Qualities:

- **Tall, green plant with serrated, heart-shaped leaves**
- **Leaves and stems covered in tiny stinging hairs**
- **Small, inconspicuous green flowers clustered on the stem**
- **Fibrous, square stems that can reach over 6 feet tall**
- **Grows in dense patches in moist, shady areas**

Lamb's Quarters **(Chenopodium album)**



**A tall, green
plant with
triangular
leaves and tiny
white flowers.**

**Lamb's
quarters is
actually a
highly
nutritious wild
edible.**

Lamb's quarters is a close relative of quinoa and spinach, and it shares their impressive nutritional profile. The leaves are packed with vitamins A, C, and K, as well as minerals like calcium, iron, and magnesium. They also contain beneficial plant compounds like saponins and betalains.



The young leaves and shoots can be eaten raw in salads or cooked like spinach. The seeds are edible too, and can be ground into a nutritious flour. Even the pollen from the flowers has been used as a gluten-free flour.



For centuries, lamb's quarters was a valued food source for indigenous groups across North America. The Iroquois, Navajo, and Hopi all incorporated the plant into their diets. It was also used in traditional Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine to treat various ailments.



5 Lamb's Quarters Facts:

- **Close relative of quinoa and spinach**
- **Leaves are packed with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants**
- **Young leaves, shoots, seeds, and pollen are all edible**
- **Used as a food and medicine by many indigenous groups**
- **Grows readily in disturbed soils and gardens**

5 Lamb's Quarters Qualities:

- Tall, green plant with triangular, toothed leaves**
- Leaves are covered in a white, powdery coating**
- Small, green flowers clustered at the top of the plant**
- Taproot with many spreading branches**
- Mild, spinach-like flavor when cooked**

Purple Camas (*Camassia quamash*)



If you have ever noticed a carpet of tall purple flower spikes swaying in the breeze, you were likely admiring the stunning blooms of purple camas. This beautiful native plant has a long history of cultural significance for indigenous groups in the region.

Purple camas is a member of the asparagus family, but its edible bulbs were a staple food for many tribes like the Nez Perce, Cree and Coast Salish. The bulbs were harvested in late spring and early summer, then baked in earthen ovens until soft and sweet. They could be eaten right away or dried and stored for winter.



But camas weren't just an important food source - it also held deep spiritual and cultural meaning. The plant's purple flowers were used in ceremonies and rituals, and the bulbs were traded as a valuable commodity. Camas meadows were carefully tended and protected, with the plants sometimes transplanted to new areas.

Camas are still beloved for their beauty, with the tall spikes of violet-blue flowers making a stunning display in spring gardens

**Camas' bulbs can be roasted,
baked into breads, or even
fermented into a cider.**

**Just be careful
they are the bulbs
of Camas and not
those of Death
Camas (*Zidadenus*
spp.) The flowers
bear almost no
resemblance to
each other so it
would only be the
bulbs that you may
confuse.**





**These are
Death Camas.
To me there is
little
resemblance.**

**Use your
discretion.**



5 Purple Camas Facts:

- **Member of the asparagus family with edible bulbs**
- **Staple food for many indigenous groups in the Pacific Northwest**
- **Bulbs were baked, dried and stored for winter**
- **Flowers held deep spiritual and cultural significance**
- **Meadows were carefully tended and protected**

5 Purple Camas Qualities:

- **Tall spikes of violet-blue, star-shaped flowers**
- **Strap-like green leaves emerging from the base**
- **Bulbs are white, round and onion-like in appearance**
- **Grows in moist meadows and prairies**
- **Blooms in late spring to early summer**

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