FIELD SORREL, SHEEP SORREL (*Rumex acetosella*)

FLOWERS: May - September

DESCRIPTION: Basal, arrowhead leaves, sour taste.

HABITAT: Sour soils of fallow fields, waste ground, railroads

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: April - November

USES: Salad, potherb, soup, seasoning

CAUTION: See page 214

I love the shape of this arrow-like leaf as well as the sour taste. It, like the wood sorrel, enhances a tossed salad. While this is not a member of the wood sorrel family, like that family it contains potassium oxalate which could be poisonous if eaten in large quantities. The small amounts eaten fresh in salad or as a field nibble are of little concern. It loses its poison potential after being boiled, therefore making it a safe, tasty addition to the greens pot. Another excellent use is to chop it up and add it to cole slaw.

A soup made from field sorrel is great! Cook the sorrel for 30 minutes. Add 4 cups milk, chopped onion, 2 t butter, 2 T flour. I serve this soup with onion breads.

On a recent weekend outing my menu called for bacon-lettuce-tomato sandwiches. I forgot the lettuce. A short hike produced a large supply of field sorrel and the needed lettuce. Anyone for a Bacon-Sorrel-Tomato? You'll try this again, I'm sure.

Old-timers used this plant in a variety of ways. The leaves were used to cleanse the blood, expel worms and warm the heart, while the roots aided menstruation and expelled kidney stones. You've got to admit, that's quite a plant!
LAMB'S QUARTERS
(Chenopodium album)

FLOWERS: May - October

DESCRIPTION: Branching stems, red streaked.
Leaves green above, whitish under, toothed.
Goosefoot Family.

HABITAT: Waste and cultivated ground, railroads, barnyards

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: April - November

USES: Potherb, vegetable, salad, flour

Lamb's quarters, or pigweed as it is sometimes called, is another plant I half-heartedly allow to stay in a portion of my flower garden. It is mild as a vegetable and a worthy substitute for lettuce in a tossed salad. The tops are a tender source of edibles from spring until frost kills it in the fall. When lettuce prices soared, lamb's quarters got a workout at our house.

We have a farm, making us dude farmers, that has a garden of sorts planted. We were not able to get the land plowed last fall, so the dirt clods are huge and the area rough. We had cleaned out an old outbuilding and spread all the well-seasoned fertilizer over the garden site. Two weeks of rain and no attention produced the largest supply of lamb's quarters one could ever want! The problem was that we really wanted the tomatoes, corn, cucumbers, squash, watermelons, beans, beets, etc. that were literally lost under the canopy of lamb's quarters!!! What's this about you can't have your cake....?
Like most greens, lamb's quarters shrinks in cooking so you need to gather about three times the amount needed when cooked. It is good alone or goes into the pot with poke and dock. Cook these greens for about an hour in a small amount of water. Season with salt, pepper, butter and vinegar or lemon juice.

I freely substitute lamb's quarters for spinach in any recipe and have good results. Baked lamb's quarters is fixed in the following manner. Pick 6 cups of lamb's quarters. (Hopefully you'll have 2 cups after cooking.) Melt 1 T butter and add 1 T flour, ½ t salt and a dash of pepper, and add 1 cup hot milk. Cook until the sauce thickens, then add the lamb's quarters. Pour into a greased casserole and sprinkle the top with ¼ cup of grated cheese. Bake 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

This green may be wilted for excellent results. Fry a couple of strips of bacon and crumble over a bowl of washed lamb's quarters and a small amount of wild onion. Using the bacon grease, add equal amounts of vinegar and water and 1 T sugar along with 1 t salt. Bring this to a boil and pour over your salad. The hot mixture causes the greens to droop or wilt. This is even better when leaf lettuce and Cossack asparagus slices are added to the lamb's quarters.

I'm particularly fond of the rice casserole listed for purslane on page 60, using lamb's quarters as the spinach substitute. Another delectable use is to include lamb's quarters in your omelet.

An appetizer may be made by cooking a cup of lamb's quarters. The cooked greens will boil down to about one-third cup. Add the third-cup of cooked greens to a 3 oz. package of cream cheese and blend. Spread the mixture on melba toast or crackers. A dab of wild jelly may be added on top for variety.

In the fall the seeds can be gathered by cutting off the seed spikes, pouring back and forth to winnow away the chaff, and getting the seeds for cereal. The seeds can be ground raw, roasted for 2 hours in a 350-degree oven and mashed. This mashed product should later be ground. This is a substitute for wheat flour in pancakes, muffins, and biscuits. It gives a dark coloration to the food and a taste that makes it hardly worth the effort.

However, for the leaves alone, it is a plant well worth getting to know.
Green amaranth is also called pigsweed because pigs find it a palatable meal. Another name is wild beet. This helps in identifying the plant because the roots are bright red.

I'm partial to this spinach substitute because of its mild taste. It's also a good green to add to the greens pot to tone down stronger tastes.

We have horses and with horses go the barnlot weeds, which is where I find green amaranth growing rampant. They are another unlikely choice for food, with green flowerspikes and a thorny appearance. Nonetheless, when they are 6" to 8" tall they make a very passable spinach substitute. I've fixed this plant in an egg-cheese casserole for a wild food dinner party. The comments were very favorable. To fix Green Amaranth Casserole, cook enough greens to yield two cups of cooked greens. Place a layer of amaranth in a greased casserole, a layer of sliced hard-boiled eggs, another layer of amaranth and cover with a cheese sauce of 2 cups
milk, 6 T oleo melted and blended with 6 T flour, salt and pepper to taste, and 1 cup cheddar cheese. Bake at 350 degrees for half an hour.

I've also fixed this plant as a rice-spinach casserole. Tossed in oil and sprinkled with vinegar, amaranth makes a very passable dish, and it can also be eaten raw in salad. Every way has proven to be an agreeable dinner dish. You gotta admit — it's not the run-of-the-mill dinner vegetable, and variety is added to your vegetable list!

In the fall the flower spikes produce an abundance of small, shiny black seeds which provide a flour substitute when ground and mixed with either white or wheat flour. The taste leaves something to be desired. Euell Gibbons felt the flavor was improved by roasting the seeds prior to grinding them. Seeds roasted 1-1½ hours in a 350-degree oven, stirred occasionally, seem to lose some of the disagreeable flavor.
WILD GRAPES (*Vitis* species)

FLOWERS: May - July

DESCRIPTION: Large, heart-shaped leaves, toothed. Climbing tendrils, small green flowers hang on the cluster stem.

HABITAT: Woods, thickets, stream banks, fence-rows

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: September - November

USES: Jelly, pies, salads, wine, juice, wrap for small game birds

CAUTION: Moonseed is a poisonous look-alike. The berries of moonseed have a moon-shaped seed inside while wild grapes have the tear-drop seed. The vine of wild grape is woody with bark that shreds. Moonseed vines are neither woody nor easily shredded. The leaf of moonseed is generally smooth and lobed but not toothed as are the grape’s. See page 218.

There are eight or more varieties of wild grapes in Missouri, some larger, some sweeter, yet all that I’ve tried make a decent jelly.

There is one tidbit of information worth knowing before picking wild grapes. A similar plant, bearing fruits much like the grape, is the poisonous moonseed, so named because of a crescent-shaped moon seed inside. Look up this plant, then proceed.

Early in the spring and summer, the tender wild grape leaves are a nice addition to a tossed salad. They are somewhat hard to chew, but so is fresh spinach in a salad!

Grape leaves impart a great flavor in a dill crock, when a few are added between layers of wild picklings. In fact, the young tendrils are acceptable in a pickling solution for later use as a nibble or to be used in slaw.
As a main dish, try stuffed grape leaves. I make a rice-venison (or -hamburger), onion, tomato mixture. Place a large spoonful on the leaf, roll it toward the leaf point, tucking in the ends as you go, and steam in a covered dish for an hour. I find the leaf is generally not eaten in full, but the rice stuffing is moist and delicious.

Grape leaves do good things for dove. Wrap each dove, after marinating it, in two grape leaves and put all of them in a covered casserole. Euell Gibbons uses a sauce of \( \frac{1}{2} \) stick butter, 1 T flour, salt and pepper. This adds the proper final touches. Quail or any game may be fixed this way also. I so love broiled quail with a strip of bacon wrapped around it that I have only used the grape leaves once. However, others prefer quail in a stuffing or steamed, so try it.

To preserve the leaves for winter use, sprinkle salt on each leaf, stacking one on top of the other. I put these in a piece of Tupperware and seal. Before using, wash the salt off thoroughly.

The grapes are great for jelly. To make grape jelly, cover the grapes with water and cook 10 minutes or so. Pour off the liquid and add 1 cup of sugar per cup of juice and a box of Sure-Jell per four cups of liquid. Cook the mixture until the jelly drops together at the end and slithers off your spoon. Set off the stove, skim off the white foam topping, and pour into jars. Grape juice is another good way to save the grapes. Wash, stem, and mash grapes in a kettle. Barely cover them with water and simmer 30 minutes. Strain, add sugar to taste (approximately 1 or 1\( \frac{1}{2} \) cups per quart). Simmer again for 15 minutes and pour into sterilized jars and seal. If canned unsweetened, the juice may be used in making jelly during the winter.

A yummy sherbet can be made from this juice in an ice tray. Combine 2 cups juice, 3 cups half and half, \( \frac{1}{4} \) cup crushed pineapple, 1 T lemon juice and 1 cup sugar. Freeze until firm, then beat with a mixer and return to the freezer.

A wine connoisseur would not let the thought of using the fruits of the wild grape for this cause go by unmentioned. For those individuals, here is a simple wine recipe. Place 2 cups washed, stemmed grapes in a crock, add 1 cup sugar and continue this layering process until you run out of grapes or crock. Cover and allow the crock to set in a cool, dark basement for a couple of months. Carefully put the liquid into bottles and cap.

A grape pie is yours by running the cooked berries through the colander to get 2 cups pulp. Add 1 cup sugar, 3 T flour, 1 t lemon juice, 1 T butter, salt. Put in a pie crust and bake at 425 degrees for an hour.
Ginseng, according to the Chinese, is an aphrodisiac, heart stimulant and cure-all for most diseases. Perhaps the enticement of an aphrodisiac, maybe the market value of the roots, but regardless of the reason, ginseng's existence has been threatened in many parts of Missouri. The roots are the part of the plant most sought. These long, fleshy roots are aromatic and parsnip-like, found deep under the low-growing plant. The roots are shaped much like a man which gives the plant its name. In Chinese, Ginseng means "likeness of a man," and roots most shaped like a man are considered priceless.

The roots may be used as an emergency food by boiling and seasoning with salt, pepper and butter. The young leaves of ginseng, either fresh or dried, may be used for a tea.
I collected some of the red berries of the buck brush or Indian currants. They are very distasteful, although I was not ill nor did I show any signs of ill effects from eating them. I dried a cup of these berries by placing them on a screen in my attic and forgetting them for a few months. My collecting had been spurred on by The Good Earth Almanac which reported that the berries of this plant were used by Indians as a pemmican, or dried jerky-like food source. This has apparently been used with venison and other dried fruits pounded into a flat, thin layer and dried. I pounded the cupful of fresh berries into a thin leather to dry, and later pounded the dried berries into the thin strips, but found the taste was such that I would use it strictly as a survival need!!!

Steyermark mentions that the birds do not eat the fruits. Another source indicated that they did. Following Steyermark's advice, fellows, will make you a wise bird!!
yellow-flowering edibles
Bellwort is a beautiful plant whose leaves encircle the stem at the leaf base. The yellow flower forms a seed pod much resembling a bell-shaped wort.

I've fixed the young shoots as an asparagus-type vegetable in early spring. The shoots should be picked early as they get tough and stringy later. I find most vegetables are best when cooked in boiling salted water for several minutes and doused with butter. I realized how religiously I do this when one of my daughters said, "Mom, all vegetables taste a lot like butter, don't they?"

I have used these plants sparingly so as not to endanger their propagation.

The roots look like long bean sprouts joined at the top with a few new growth shoots which seem to be present for the following year's growth. The real job is to wash and clean the tightly packed roots in preparation for cooking. The roots have an edible center, with a string-like cord that makes a most unattractive appearing
dish. The nutty-flavored roots must be nibbled off this core, making one work for his supper. I place this in my emergency-food-only category.

Fernald and Kinsey state that a diet drink is extracted from the roots. My experiments proved the liquid from the roots to be very bitter, unhelped with sugar, honey or syrup. While it is not to my liking, I am confident that with this as my "diet drink" I would indeed lose weight!

DAY LILY (Hemerocallis lilio-aspheodelus)
FLOWERS: May - August
DESCRIPTION: Long, grass-like leaves from root-stalk. Flowers form on tip of naked stem.
Lily Family.
HABITAT: Escaped to fields, roadsides, railroads, moist wooded banks
LOCATION: Statewide
COLLECTION: Shoots, April - May; Buds, June - July; Tubers, all year
USES: Salad, vegetable, soup, pickle, fritter

The day lily is another of mother nature's grocery stores. It has a variety of uses and all are excellent food sources. I grow day lilies both for their aesthetic beauty as well as for my eating enjoyment.
The inner young sprout, as it is coming up, may be used in a tossed salad or cooked as asparagus. Pull up the new growth by separating the leaves and cutting down deep with a knife. These tender inner leaves may be cut up in a tossed salad to add a tasty, unidentified morsel. On the other hand, the lower 3 or 4 inches may be placed in boiling water for no longer than two minutes and served with butter for a delightful and mild vegetable.

My favorite meal is the unopened flower buds. These, picked while still in tight bud and boiled for a couple of minutes, give a delicious vegetable that resembles the mildness of green beans with the slightly fiberous texture of asparagus. Of course, I coat them with butter before serving.

The opened flower makes a tasty fritter. There are several fritter recipes which are good. One calls for 1 cup flour, 1 cup champagne or beer, ¼ t salt, 1 T corn oil. The mixture should be stirred together and allowed to set 30 minutes before using. Fry in hot grease, drain on a paper towel and dust with sugar. Another fritter suggestion: 1 cup whole wheat flour, 1 t salt, 2 T soybean or vegetable oil, 2 eggs, ¼ cup milk. Dip the blossoms into the batter, then into hot oil. Drain and sugar.

The drooping, wilted flower of yesterday is an addition to be used in soups, stews or Chinese foods. It becomes somewhat like a gelatin mass and aids thickening.

Because these products are so good, it is wise to try to freeze or dry some for winter. In drying the buds, place them on an old window screen and leave them in the attic until they become thoroughly dried. Later, seal the dried buds in a jar. I have a supply I’ve been using for three years now, so they do keep. When this vegetable is desired during off-seasons, let them soak for a few minutes in water before preparing as you would the fresh variety.

If you are wanting to try something different, place some of the unopened buds in your pickle crock along with poke stems which have been peeled, redbud pods, cattail shoots, day lily shoots, purslane stems and any other item worthy of pickling. To prepare this crock, layer each vegetable over a layer of dill, garlic, onions and red peppers. Place grape leaves (wild ones, of course, but either work) between each different vegetable layer. Cover the entire thing with a brine solution of 1 part salt, ½ part vinegar and 10 parts water. Weight down the vegetables with a saucer to keep everything below the liquid. Leave for two weeks and put the finished product in a jar and seal.

Underground, the day lily produces small tubers which can be dug up at any time of the year when the ground is not frozen. These tubers are good raw in a salad, giving a hint of radish. Cook
the tubers for a few minutes and serve with butter for a very passable vegetable, although I prefer the raw uses. The cooked tubers may also be made into a potato salad as a potato substitute.

It is my understanding that day lily buds, crayfish, a few sassafras leaves and a bit of wild onion make a tantalizing wild gumbo. You can bet I'll try it.

I am much in awe of this remarkable garden escapee, the day lily! It is my family's favorite vegetable, wild or domesticated. With anything so good, I'm always amazed more use is not made from this storage pantry of Mother Nature's!
PURSLANE (*Portulaca oleracea*)

FLOWERS: June - November

DESCRIPTION: Low growing, succulent stems, green or purple. Leaves nearly opposite, green and reddish. Flowers form in forked stems. Purslane Family.

HABITAT: Cultivated and waste ground, rocky areas, open places

LOCATION: Scattered statewide

COLLECTION: June - November

USES: Salad, potherb, pickle, breadstuff

Purslane enjoys gardens, flowerbeds, fields, waste areas. I have a large patch of purslane I’m encouraging in my backyard. This creeping plant is rarely taller than the lawnmower blade, although it may branch out 6 inches or a foot. It is a thick-stemmed, fleshy plant whose tiny yellow flower blooms on sunny mornings.

The plant is gritty and needs to be thoroughly washed before cooking or using. Unlike spinach, purslane doesn’t cook away. I have used purslane in a variety of ways and like it in all of them. More important, and possibly a more accurate indicator, my family also enjoys this vegetable.

Place the end tips of purslane in a tossed salad for a new taste and texture. Or, for a real treat, wilt the purslane. Fry a couple pieces of bacon and crumble them over the purslane. In a
saucepan add equal amounts of the bacon grease, water and vinegar with 1 T sugar and 1 t salt. Bring this to a boil and pour over the purslane, causing it to wilt.

Purslane makes an excellent rice casserole. In a greased casserole, add 1/2 cup uncooked rice, 1 cup beef or chicken bouillon, 1 cup water, 1 T onion, 1/2 stick oleo, 1/2 cup grated cheddar cheese, 1 cup purslane, salt and pepper. Stir slightly and bake at 350 degrees for about 45 minutes. This is elegant enough for the most delightful of dinner parties. The piece de resistance, however, is what I call Party Purslane Casserole. Boil the purslane tips for 10 minutes, saute 1 large onion in 6 T bacon drippings. Drain purslane and add the onion, 1 t salt, 1/2 t pepper, 1/4 cup cracker crumbs. Beat in 2 eggs, one at a time. Pour into your greased casserole and top with 1/4 cup cracker crumbs. Bake at 400 degrees for 15 minutes. I'm hungry just thinking about it!

For another yummy dish, try a cheese casserole. Hard-boil 4 eggs. Parboil the purslane for a few minutes, then layer purslane and sliced eggs as many times as possible, ending with the purslane. Pour the following mixture over the layered vegetable: 1/2 stick melted oleo blended with 4 T flour and 2 cups of hot milk. Add a teaspoon each of salt, pepper, mace. Dump in a cup of grated cheese. Cook this until the mixture begins to thicken. After pouring this cheese sauce into the layered casserole, bake at 250 degrees for 30 minutes. It is positively superb!

Purslane may also be fixed in an egg batter and fried. Roll the stems and leaves in flour, dip into an egg batter, then reroll in cracker crumbs and fry in a hot fat. This is delicious and could be used as a main course as you would morel mushrooms. My entire family accepts this wilding as a natural, domestic vegetable, thus giving it one of the highest ratings possible on my wild edibles scale.

The fleshy stems make a pickle which I've added to my dill crock with other wild pickleables. I suppose you could use any pickle recipes, but I tend to make a dill variety with the wildings. See page 7.

The small seeds form in a capsule that pops off its lid and scatters easily. These tiny seeds can be used by collecting the plants on a fine meshed screen, allowing the seeds to shake through into a collection box. The results are hardly worth the effort and energy applied, but it could be eaten if needed.

I feel very smug with my patch of purslane growing. I just hope it reproduces as easily as literature indicates; may it forever thrive in my backyard!!!!
The lotus is another of those plants that singly provides a sufficient food supply. While I have done some experimenting with this plant, I still leave a great deal untried.

If you get the stalk and leaf as it is still unfolding, it makes a good vegetable when boiled in two waters for a short period of time.

The seed pods are easy to gather as they are above water. The immature seeds may be added to a salad. They are somewhat marshy or musty, but nonetheless acceptable. They may be eaten raw or cooked. After the seedpod dries, the seeds may be removed from the shell by roasting in a 350-degree oven. The seeds may then be cooked and ground as a flour substitute. The seeds may be popped like popcorn. It doesn’t pop, but swells and looks more like the unpopped kernels. These kernels may either be eaten or ground and used to make bread.

If you are really ambitious, and enjoy scuba or skin diving, get the rootstock tubers in the autumn or spring. They may be baked as you would a potato.
The lotus, or water-chinquapin as it is also called, has long been used by many Indian tribes as a fresh vegetable in season or dried to be used out of season.

SASSAFRAS (*Sassafras albidum*)

FLOWERS: April - May

DESCRIPTION: Green twigs. Leaves are alternate and of three shapes: mitten, one-thumb mitten, two-thumb mitten. Laurel Family.

HABITAT: Border of woods, prairies, roadsides, railroads, fencerows, fallow fields

LOCATION: Central and southern Missouri

COLLECTION: Roots, all year, best in February or March; Leaves, May - June

USES: Tea, jelly, soups, salad

CAUTION: The F.D.A. has banned the sale of sassafras tea. Safrole has produced liver cancer in rats.

The sassafras is an important tree in America and is used for a variety of medicinal, nutritional and commercial uses. The most popular use is sassafras tea made from the roots. The roots, when cut, create an unmistakable odor of rootbeer. It may be washed, boiled in water and served hot or cold, sweetened
or unsweetened. I have yet to be disappointed in any of the forementioned ways. A really neat feature of these roots is their ability to be reused several times for tea. Merely save them and put in the water to reboil. Or, you can simply leave the roots in a saucepan on the stove if you indulge in the tea daily. One word of caution: I discovered that when left on the kitchen counter in a plastic bag, they mold. How about placing the roots in the refrigerator until the next use?

Another word of caution here: I have recently read that herbal teas containing safrole (from the sassafras root) have been banned by the F.D.A. Safrole has apparently caused liver cancer in laboratory rats. Perhaps sassafras root tea should be eliminated from your list of outdoor edibles.

A sassafras jelly can be made by brewing a strong tea. Each cup of tea gets a cup of sugar and the liquid is boiled. I generally use half a package of Sure-Jell when making wild jellies. This jelly is good as an accompaniment to wild meats and pork.

The young leaves, buds and twigs are used in soups and for making teas. Also, the young raw leaves add a spicy touch to a tossed salad. When dried, they are used in soups and creole dishes. Sassafras bark is used in making mulberry tea. The tender young leaves also make a tea which I don’t feel can compare well enough with the root tea to bother with. It was used as a spring tonic to thin the blood.
**SPICE BUSH** (*Lindera benzoin*)

FLOWERS: March - May


HABITAT: Low or moist woodland, thickets, along streams, valleys, ravine bottoms, base of bluffs, wooded slopes

LOCATION: Southern and east-central counties

COLLECTION: March - May

USES: Tea, spice

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Early spring brings a beautiful but tiny yellow blossom which is closely attached to the twig of a spice bush. The noticeable lenticles on the trunk and branches, and the spicy aroma when the bark is scraped, aid in making positive identification of this small shrub tree.

The early flowers, tips of twigs, leaves or bark may be chopped up and used for making a tea. Add 1 teaspoon of the spice bush mixture to 1 cup boiling water and steep for 3 - 5 minutes. This dark grayish tea is spicy and appealing to drink. Later, the berries may be used for making tea or dried and powdered as a substitute for allspice.

If your woodland hike has given you cotton mouth, chewing on a twig of spice bush will relieve the situation and let your mouth become moist again. If you don’t believe me, try it yourself!
WINTER CRESS (Barbarea vulgaris)

FLOWERS: April - June
DESCRIPTION: Leaves dark green, start as rosette, rounded lobe at the end of the leaf stem, 2 - 8 pairs small lateral leaves down stem. Mustard Family.
HABITAT: Fallow ground, cultivated fields, wet meadows, pastures, railroads and roadsides
LOCATION: Statewide
COLLECTION: Greens, January - March; Flowers, April - July
USES: Salad, potherb, vegetable

Literature states that winter cress was the only green plant that could be picked to eat on Ste. Barbara's Day, December 4, thus giving its botanical identity.

This member of the mustard family is found all winter. The young plant's leaves may be picked in early spring or before for use in a tossed salad. Later the leaves become bitter and may need to be boiled in at least two waters when using as a spinach. The buds or flowers can be picked over several weeks until the flowers
are fully opened. These are gathered and prepared as broccoli, boiling for a short period of time in two boiling water baths. I hardly know whether to be glad or sad that most people do not use this food source. However, there is more than enough to share, the price is right, and for an afternoon of your time, you have an unusual vegetable for dinner. My favorite way to serve this vegetable is to cook and coat with butter. There I go with the butter-tasting vegetable routine again!!

I also found it good in a variety of other ways. Cook the flowers and serve with a cheese sauce, like broccoli. A great menu dish is to saute 2 T onion in 3 T butter. Blend 3 T flour in 1 cup milk and add nutmeg, salt and pepper to taste. Simmer with the flowers for about 5 minutes and add ¼ cup cream. Bring to a bubble and serve hot. This second recipe is great with the leaves instead of the flowers. The young leaves are excellent in a rice casserole as a spinach substitute. Try the same recipe as listed for chickweed on page 11.

I sometimes think my children try everything I fix just for the novelty of telling teachers and friends the next day, “You should have seen what I had to eat last night!” At any rate, it brings in a variety of different vegetables to the table.

The seed pods may be used in making a hot mustard sauce which can be served with Chinese food or wild game. Raw, the pods have a hot tang resembling the hot sauce of many Chinese dips.

I froze several packages of the greens to be used in any recipe as a frozen spinach substitute. The packages that I blanched were good, but those I fresh froze were bitter in cooking.

These leaves soften themselves in the pot with a mess of spring greens as they are an excellent potherb. The difference between salad and potherb is that salad may be eaten raw and potherb needs to be cooked.
CINQUEFOIL (Potentilla simplex)
FLOWERS: April - June
DESCRIPTION: Leaves divided, 5 leaflets, sharply toothed. Stems trail on ground. Flowers 5 petals. Rose Family.

HABITAT: Open woods, prairies, fields, roadsides, railroads

LOCATION: Throughout
COLLECTION: March - June
USES: Tea

This common species, also known as five-finger, has a five-parted leaf and is a dense carpet as a ground cover. The flowers are yellow and the entire plant slightly resembles a wild strawberry plant whose leaves are 5- rather than 3-parted.

The early leaves may be dried and used as a tea substitute which is rich in calcium. The Shrubby Cinquefoil leaves are reported to be best.

Schaeffer states that cinquefoil is a drug source used to treat muscle spasms, while Hatfield gives it powers in witchcraft, love potions, as a mouth wash and gargle for sore throats, pimples and sunburn.

Already it is taking on qualities of the old herb medicine bottle that was good for whatever ails you.

As a tea, the taste is good and the color a golden tone. Just drinking it makes me feel protected from evil spirits and witches, cleared of sore throat and bad breath. Not only that, but the drop that slid down my chin might clear up the complexion!!!
SMOOTH SUMAC (Rhus glabra, R. typhina, R. copallina, R. aromatica)

FLOWERS: May - July
DESCRIPTION: Shrub, leaves alternate and compound with leaflets of 9 - 27, toothed, pointed. Flower is upright cluster, greenish-yellow. Cashew Family.
HABITAT: Prairies, thickets, abandoned fields, borders of and woods openings, roadsides, railroads
LOCATION: Every county
COLLECTION: Summer, fall dried all winter
USES: Drink, jelly

Indian lemonade is made from the bright red berries of the sumac. To make this delicious drink, mash or bruise some berries in water, then stir or mash them for several minutes. Strain the liquid through cheese cloth several times to remove the fine hairs. These same hairs gave the drink its tangy flavor originally. Because this pink drink has a sour flavor resembling lemonade and was prepared by the Indians, it has been called Indian Lemonade. Gibbons very cleverly called this cold, sweetened drink “Rhus jhus.”

Once I collected the berries too early in the summer and the drink, while somewhat bitter, tasted like a dry, unfermented wine.
The juice from the sumac berries makes a jelly worthy of a meat compliment. This jelly is made by covering the entire heads with water and steaming for 10 minutes. Pour off the liquid, strain,
add matching amounts of sugar, 1 box pectin per 4 cups of juice and cook until it slithers off the spoon. Remove from the stove, skim off the white, foamy top and seal in sterilized jars or cover with paraffin. One might note that boiling the berries renders a rather disagreeable flavor which is and was used for sore throats.

The heads of sumac berries may be picked and dried for winter use. A hot drink is produced by putting the berries in the top of a coffee pot and letting them perk.

*It might be wise to include the fact that only the red berries of sumac are edible; the sumac which bears white berries is said to be poisonous.*

Fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*) is often confused with poison ivy. While there are leaves of three, the fragrant sumac leaf is more rounded and does not have the sharp leaf tip of poison ivy. The leaf, when crushed, is very fragrant and aromatic.

Berries of fragrant sumac are hairy in appearance, round and in tight clusters. They contain a high acidity, which makes them choice fruits for pink lemonade. They may be used in any of the above recipes.

Drive along any country road, and look along the superhighways. My guess is you can’t miss finding this wild edible.
One November when I was visiting my folks' cabin at Lake Wappapello, I ran across a large, fruit-bearing prickly pear. The fruit was a reddish brown and about the size of my thumb. I suppose the shape gives it a nickname of Indian Fig. I slit the end off, cut down the length of it and ate the pulp. It was palatable, in no way disagreeable and not like a fig in flavor.

Fernald and Kinsey suggest that the thick leaflike stems of this cactus can be roasted in a campfire, peeled and eaten. It's slimy but edible.

A word of warning about picking or handling the prickly pear. The thick stems appear to have a smooth surface around the obvious prickly points. Do not let the smooth appearance fool you! If you try to pick them by carefully placing thumb and forefinger in the clear areas, tiny, almost invisible prickers will plant themselves in your skin.

I have spent an hour removing these fine spines from the hand of someone who attempted such a feat. Once they're in your skin, everything you touch only serves to embed them deeper.

This plant is well named!!!
GROUND CHERRY (*Physalis* .. various species)

FLOWERS: May - August

DESCRIPTION: Bell-shaped flower in leaf axis. Leaf variety great in different species, but triangular in shape, usually alternate. Nightshade Family.

HABITAT: Open dry ground, railroads, fields, waste ground, sandy soils, gravel bars

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: July - October

USES: Preserves, jelly, pie, fresh

The ground cherry has a sprawling ability, and while remaining 6” to 12” tall, can cover several feet on the ground. The yellow bell or funnel flower is replaced with a papery, shell-like Chinese lantern. The shell becomes a tan color while the cherry inside is a greenish color which turns to yellow then orange. The pod falls to the ground and continues to ripen. To use these “cherries,” which are tomato relatives and no real kin to the cherry, husk them out of their inch-size shell.

A jam or jelly, using 3 cups liquid to 3 cups sugar and Sure-Jell, can be made from the fruits. If you are making jam, remember you do not add the Sure-Jell, but you do need the pulp from the fruit. To get the pulp, run the fruits through a colander. The addition of lemon juice and peel makes an improved jelly. Preserves are made by boiling 3 cups sugar, 1 cup water, 1 lemon thinly sliced and 1 cinnamon stick for 10 minutes. Add a quart of ground cherries and boil until clear and the juice is thick. Let it set overnight, bring to a boil the next day and pour into jars. In Hawaii, Gibbons says, this is called Poha Preserves.
Gibbons uses the fruits for a pie which he says combines the taste of apples and apricots. Make your crust for a 9" pie pan. Fill with 3 cups husked, washed cherries. Pour over a sauce of ¼ cup flour, 1 cup sugar, ¼ t salt, ¼ t cinnamon and juice of a lemon. Put on a top crust and bake for 45 minutes in a 350-degree oven.

The paper Chinese lantern shell makes such a cute home for the cherry tomato inside!
GOATSBEARD (*Tragopogon dubius*)

FLOWERS: May - July

DESCRIPTION: Leaves long, thin, both basal and alternate on stem. Flower and seed head dandelion-like. Composite Family.

HABITAT: Roadsides, fields, meadows, railroads, waste ground

LOCATION: Scattered in north, central and eastern Missouri

COLLECTION: Greens, early spring; Roots, autumn - spring

USES: Potherb, vegetable

My first experience with the yellow flowering goatsbeard, also called salsify, was along a highway (when we used to drive 70 mph) and I thought it to be the largest variety of dandelion I'd ever seen! A search through the wildflower books proved it to be the goatsbeard.

My first experience at fixing it to eat was not a successful one, either. I located the pretty flowering plant and dug up the root which was about the size of a good dandelion tap root. I took my roots home, washed them, scraped and boiled them. They were extremely woody and inedible. I sucked out the juices and spit out the fibers. Further reading gave me insight into my problem. The roots are to be collected before the flowering bloom stalk shoots up or after the plant has faded out. This period is while the starch is still in the roots. One needs to stake out the spots for winter digging.
The roots may be fixed in a variety of ways. One way is to peel, cut the root into small chunks and simmer in water until a fork will stick into them easily, just as you would check on potatoes. Pour off the water, salt, pepper and serve with butter or cover with a white sauce. Angier suggests French-frying the root. To do this, cut the root lengthwise, coat with flour, salt and pepper mixture, dip into an egg and cream batter and roll in bread crumbs. Melt oleo in a pan (about ½ stick per person to be served) and fry each root piece so that it is separated from the rest.

The early leaves go into the greens pot and the shoots may be boiled and buttered.

**DANDELION** (*Taraxacum officinale*)

FLOWERS: January - December

DESCRIPTION: Rosette, leaves long, narrow, lobed. Yellow flower quickly followed with seed stalk. Composite Family.

HABITAT: Lawns, gardens, around dwellings, fields, meadows, roadsides, railroads

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: Leaves, March - April; Flowers, April - July; Roots, September - Spring

USES: Salad, potherb, coffee, wine, pancake, vegetable

Dandelions are praised by most wild edible authors as being king of the potherb set. Its availability and rich vitamin and
mineral value make it a healthful, sought-after member for a spring greens mess. I have tried the dandelion in a number of ways and simply cannot find many ways I’m very enthusiastic about.

The bitter taste becomes more pronounced if boiled first in water that begins cold. As with milkweed, the bitterness is reduced by starting in boiling water and boiling in three separate waters for one minute each. Your yard variety, or any close-cropped dandelion, tends to be extremely bitter and tough. The best species are obtained from fields or roadsides where they have been “let go.”

When gathered, as the first leaves are unfolding in the early spring, the raw leaf may be added sparingly to a tossed salad or tried in scrambled eggs.

Dandelion pancakes are made by adding the yellow flowers to a pancake batter. Gather the flower heads in the morning and carefully remove the bitter green calyx. The flower is made up of many small, thin individual flowers which are stirred into the batter. If you have finicky eaters in your house, sprinkle the flowers over the individual pancakes. This way you may fix plain or dandelion pancakes at the same time. Waffles can be made the same way. I do like this method of using the dandelion.

Another use for the flowers is in making dandelion wine. Pick the flowers early in the morning with little or no dew. Again, exclude the bitter calyx and press the flowers into a crock and pour boiling water over them. For two gallons of flower heads, use one gallon hot water. Let the mixture set for three days. Strain, add rind and pulp of three oranges and three lemons, three pounds of sugar and 1 ounce yeast. Cover this and leave for three weeks. After three weeks, strain, bottle and cap.

Underground, the root may be scrubbed, pared, sliced thin and cooked. I have found this not worth the trouble unless I were perhaps depending on survival foods. Another use for the roots is as a coffee substitute. Bake the scrubbed roots in a 275-degree oven for four hours, or until the roots snap and are dark brown inside. They make a hot, coffee-like drink when ground. This isn’t good, but it isn’t bad, either. The greatest problem is to grind the roots once they are baked.

If none of these ideas grab you, pick the seed head and blow three times. The remaining seeds are reported to tell time, future children, marriages, money in the bank and life expectancy. All it tells me is that the chances are good for a heavier dandelion population in that immediate area!!!
SUNFLOWER (*Helianthus* ... various species)

FLOWERS: May - November

DESCRIPTION: Species vary, often rough stem, alternate, toothed leaves. Composite Family.

HABITAT: Waste and cultivated ground, low meadows, prairies, road-sides, railroads

LOCATION: Statewide, especially northern and central Missouri

COLLECTION: Fall

USES: Breadstuff, coffee substitute

The Indians used this wild food to full advantage. Having a bit of Indian blood in me, the lure of the past was paramount in my using the sunflower.

I found it best to cut the seedheads and allow them to dry indoors. Otherwise, if left on the stalk to dry, I lost most of the seeds to the birds.

My daughters are fond of the packages of commercial sunflower seeds. Soaking the dried seeds in salt water and roasting in a 300-degree oven gives a rather good nibble. The shelled portion is eaten and the outside shell discarded.

The shelled seed may be ground and used as a meal. To shell, use a rolling pin to crack open the nuts and drop them in a bowl of water. The seeds will sink while the shells float. Dry and roast the seeds for coffee or nuts. Angier suggests trying this Sunflower Cake recipe. Use 2 cups hulled sunflower seeds, 2 cups water, 1½ t salt. Put in a pan, cover and simmer for an hour, stirring occasionally. Place in a blender and puree. Cool the mixture, add 4 T cornmeal. Mold into 2" cakes. Heat ½ cup of oil in skillet and fry cakes on both sides.

Although the roasted, crushed, boiled shells alone may be used for coffee, the roasted seeds steeped in boiling water yield a better coffee.
JERUSALEM ARTICHOKE
*(Helianthus tuberosus)*

FLOWERS: August - October

DESCRIPTION: Tall plant, 5' - 10'; leaves oblong, rough, pointed tip, thick near stalk. Flowerheads 2” - 3”, several on plant. Composite Family.

HABITAT: Moist thickets, border of streams, ponds, moist and dry woods, prairie wet spots, waste ground, railroads, roadsides

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: October - January

USES: Salad, vegetable, pickle

In *The Treasury of Botany*, W.B. Booth tells the story of the Jerusalem Artichoke. "Before the potato became plentiful ... they were used in this country [England] ... They were so common in London that even the vulgar began to despise them. They were baked in pies, along with marrow, dates, ginger, etc. and, being so plentiful and cheap, rather bred a loathing than a liking for them. Hence it appears that, as the culture of the potato extended, it gradually displaced the Jerusalem Artichoke..."

Our favorite canoe float is the North Fork River. The owner of the privately-owned campgrounds at Athelia Springs has an 80-year-old man who helps him. This gentleman is an organic
gardener who cultivates beautiful Jerusalem artichokes. He collects the irregular-shaped tubers in the fall and freezes them. He says to cook them as a potato — fried, mashed, or baked. They aren’t at all bad in any of the ways mentioned if not cooked too long or too fast.

My choice for the tuber is in a salad. The Jerusalem artichoke may be grated raw along with a variety of other raw vegetables and mixed with mayonnaise for a delicious raw salad. The tuber is crisp, white in color and very good.

The tuber makes a good addition to your dill crock. Cut the peeled tubers into pickle-sized chunks. Follow the recipe for Dill Crock on page 7. After pickling, pack into sterilized jars tightly, cover with brine solution and boil in hot water for 20 minutes after sealing jars.

Who says ANYTHING these days can be too cheap or plentiful for our liking??????
green-flowering edibles
CATTAIL (Typha latifolia)
FLOWERS: May - July
HABITAT: Swamps, muddy margins of ponds and streams, wet places
LOCATION: Statewide
COLLECTION: Shoots, April - June; Spikes, June - July; Pollen, June - July; Roots, November - March
USES: Salad, vegetable, flour, jelly, pickle

The cattail is a remarkable wild food pantry all by itself. This tall, stately reservoir of food is a constant source of supply the entire year. Around March the cattail begins sending up new shoots from the roots. These whitish protuberances make a good pickle substitute. Later March finds the cattail shoots pushing above ground. These new shoots, preferably under two feet tall, have a central core that is white and an excellent, versatile vegetable. By spreading the outer leaves and reaching down the stalk, the core breaks apart from the root and pulls out easily. Eaten raw, it gives a hint of cucumber to a tossed salad. Boiled for a few minutes in
salted water and doused with butter you have asparagus ambrosia! The Russians enjoy this vegetable, giving it the nickname of Cossack Asparagus. I also blanch and freeze some for winter’s use because it is so good. The same part of the young shoots may be pickled and an entirely new taste is introduced.

As the shoots develop, green bloom spikes begin peeking out of a thin husk. The first year I began my cattail hunt I missed this stage entirely. This is surprising since the plants develop at different stages, giving it a six- or seven-week season. All stages, therefore, may very well be gathered the same day. Now that I’ve located what I’m looking for, I break off the top spike and prepare as I would corn on the cob. Place the spikes in boiling water and boil for about 5 minutes, drain and coat with butter. This vegetable, like most wilds, has a taste and texture uniquely its own. It resembles corn on the cob only because of the long plastic-like darning needle core that remains when the “tails” or “heads” are nibbled off.

I’m extremely fond of this vegetable, although wild food party friends have had mixed opinions. The buds may be scraped off and used in a casserole as Scalloped Cattails. Scrape off 2 cups cattail flowers and put in a bowl with 2 beaten eggs, ¼ cup melted butter, ½ t sugar and nutmeg, a ½ t also of black pepper. Blend well and scald 1 cup milk which is added slowly to the cattail mixture and blended. Pour the mixture into a greased casserole and top with ½ cup grated Swiss cheese and a dab of butter. Bake at 275 degrees for 30 minutes. I’ve tried cattail in a variety of casseroles and like this recipe the most.

Cattail pollen biscuits are a big favorite with everybody who has ever tried them. The green bloom spikes turn a bright yellow as they become covered with pollen. I put a large plastic bag over the entire head (or tail?) and shake. The pollen is very fine, resembling a curry-colored talc powder. Pancakes, muffins and cookies are excellent by substituting pollen for wheat flour in any recipe. Try these Cattail Pollen Biscuits. Mix ¼ cup cattail pollen, 1¾ cups flour, 3 T baking powder, 1 t salt, 4 T shortening, ¼ cup milk. Bake, after cutting out biscuits, in 425-degree oven for 20 minutes. For an even more golden tone, you may add an additional ¼ cup of pollen. While experimenting with the pollen in various recipes, I made some Cattail Pollen Pancakes which my husband said were the best pancakes he’s ever had. Mix ½ cup pollen, ½ cup flour, 2 T baking powder, 1 t salt, 1 egg, 1 scant cup milk, 3 T bacon drippings. Pour into a hot skillet or griddle in dollar, 4-inch or super-size pancake amounts. They are better yet when topped with an elderberry syrup or when a few dried elderberries are added.
The roots offer the next course after the pollen. I found that it was foolish to refine the flour in the summer, because an all-day effort yielded only about ¼ cup flour. However, another root dig, this time in the early spring, was very successful. The rope-like roots are 6-8 inches deep and very plentiful. By peeling the outside layer and spongy layers away, the central core is left. This edible core is very fibrous and filled with a starchy material. By cutting the section into 4-inch pieces and allowing it to dry for a day, you can rub out enough flour for biscuits, pancakes, whatever is your choice. The taste is nutty or marshy, but it is good and acquired in a short period of time.

The remaining fiber sections of the roots can be placed in water so that the flour which is left may also be refined. Allow the slimy and white particles to settle, pour off the water and replace with fresh water. Repeat this process every hour or so for four or five cycles. This flour may be used wet, if used immediately in drop biscuits or cookies. I was unable to pour off all of the water without losing my wet-stage cattail flour. To this moist, somewhat slimy starch I added an equal amount of flour, 3 t baking powder, 1 t salt, 4 T shortening, generous ½ cup milk. Drop the biscuit onto an ungreased cookie sheet. Bake in a 425-degree oven until brown. Chocolate chip cookies made with the same moist flour were equally good. Again there is a marshy taste. I merely used my favorite chocolate chip cookie recipe and halved the cattail and white flour, putting it into a 350-degree oven to bake.

I've also used the roots, after the first flour has been rubbed out, to make jelly. The jelly is made by boiling the roots for 10 minutes in enough water to cover them. For every cup of liquid, add equal amounts of sugar and a package of pectin per every four cups of juice. The jelly is delicious, somewhat resembling honey in both color and taste.

I'm truly surprised more use isn't made of this fantastic natural pantry!!!!!
GRASSES (Gramineae)

FOXTAIL GRASS
(Setaria glauca)
CRAB GRASS (Digitaria sanguinalis)
GOOSE GRASS
(Eleusine indica)

FLOWERS: June - November
DESCRIPTION: See Steyermark
HABITAT: Waste ground, lawns, gardens, pastures, railroads, roadsides
LOCATION: Statewide
COLLECTION: June - November
USES: Cereals, breadstuff

While the collection of these small seeds from the grasses is tedious, they are, nonetheless, edible sources.
The foxtail seeds have stiff husks, on the order of wheat except stiffer. Roasting helps to dry and crack open the husks. One of the best uses of this grass comes from a tribe in Africa. They place the stalks of foxtail grasses over the opening in the grain storage shelter. The rats and mice get their fur so miserably tangled with the stiff husks that they leave the grain protected by these grasses alone!

Crab grass is used as a rice substitute and goose grass seeds make a flour substitute when mixed with white flour in a biscuit or muffin. Knotweed seeds are also a cereal substitute. This is a backyard and sidewalk crack pest.

Fresh and dried grass that has been ground very fine is said to be nutritious and healthful. It may be used in soups, stews, casseroles, on pizza, or on any food preparations where herbs are added.

I can remember a small boy who had been lost for several days said he stayed alive by drinking water out of the stream and eating grass. Not only does it give us an abundance of scenic color, it can also be a lifesaver.
JACK IN THE PULPIT,
INDIAN TURNIP
(Arisaema atrorubens)
GREEN DRAGON
(Arisaema dracontium)
FLOWERS: April - June
DESCRIPTION: Three leaflets on single stalk. Flower folds over spadix, jack. Tiny flowers attach to jack. Arum Family.
HABITAT: Rich wooded areas, low bottom thickets
LOCATION: Statewide
COLLECTION: Early spring and late autumn
USES: Breadstuff, chip

CAUTION: See page 212

What a unique plant is this Jack in the Pulpit! The tiny flowers are attached to the spadix, or Jack, which is surrounded by his canopied pulpit. The plant is recognized in the fall (one of the times for collecting the underground, round root or corm) by clusters of berries which are green and turn to a bright red.

The plant’s leaves and roots could cause poisoning if eaten in large quantities. However, according to the American Botanist, it would be most unlikely that large amount would be consumed raw. “When a small piece of the fresh corm is chewed the mouth feels as if being pinched with countless needles, especially at the base of the tongue ... The sensation ceases ... [if the] tongue is held
perfectly still, but the least movement renews the prickly sensations that tinges like shocks of electricity. In the course of 20 minutes most of the tingling passes off, but one may feel faint twinges for an hour or longer."

Being somewhat of the adventuresome nature, I felt a tiny scrape would give me the idea without the lasting effects. I took a corm that I had been drying for 2 weeks and scraped a TINSY, WEENSY, MINUTE bite off. Sure enough, it does feel like countless needles are hammering away at the tongue, but at the tip of mine. The article certainly knew what it was talking about. It goes without saying that the corm is VERY peppery.

It is amazing to me, with that experience as a starter, how anyone ever persevered the trials of elimination to discover that the corm, when dried but not when boiled, could prove to be edible!!!

Roasting in a slow oven for three days and nights will do it. Cutting the corm into thin slices, putting aside for several months (3-5) will also do it. When dried, the thin crisp may be eaten as is or ground and used as a flour. Angier’s cookie recipe is good. The recipe for Jack in the Pulpit cookies is as follows: beat two egg yolks, until thick. Add 1 cup brown sugar and beat into yolk. Mix in ¼ t salt and 1 cup nuts (hazelnuts are awfully good). Beat two egg whites until they form stiff peaks and fold into the above mixture. Sift 3 T Jack in the Pulpit flour and 3 T all purpose flour and stir into batter. Drop onto cookie sheet in 350-degree oven for about 7 minutes.

One source suggested using the dried chips with a dip as you would potato chips. Biscuits, pancakes, etc., may be made from the flour which Fernald states has a hint of cocoa flavoring.

I feel so smug because I discovered a valley of Jack in the Pulpits at our farm. Not only do they add a page to my edible sampling, I think they are downright cute!
CAT BRIER or GREENBRIER
(Smilax tamnoids)
FLOWERS: May - June
DESCRIPTION: Green stems, usually thorny. Tendrils for climbing.
HABITAT: Low woods in valleys and thickets, along streams, rich wooded slopes
LOCATION: Statewide
COLLECTION: May - August, tendrils; October - April, roots
USES: Vegetable, raw, pickle, flour, soup, jelly

Bristly greenbrier is indeed exactly that — a green-stemmed plant literally covered with bristly brier-like protrusions. Judging from outward appearances, I would very likely leave this growth alone. However, like many thorny bushes and plants, it has a product worth testing. In this case, a vegetable superb! This is a climbing plant, the base of which is seen all year as it doesn’t die all the way back in the winter. Starting in May, and continuing through August, the climbing ends of tendrils form a fat, fleshy stem which snaps off easily. This is truly an outstanding asparagus-like vegetable served raw, boiled, or in a casserole. It has very few competitors equal in elegance.

My favorite way to serve greenbrier shoots is to boil them for a few minutes, drain, and coat with melted butter. However, Greenbrier Casserole is a delicious dish. To fix, dip the greenbrier shoots in hot water for 10 - 15 minutes. Place a layer of greenbrier shoots in a greased casserole, then a layer of sliced hard-boiled eggs, another greenbrier layer, egg layer, ending with greenbrier.
Make a sauce by melting 6 T butter, blending in 6 T flour and 2 cups bubbling hot milk, ½ t salt, ¼ t pepper, and 1/8 t mace. Melt 1 cup grated cheddar cheese in the sauce and pour over the layers. Bake at 350 degrees for about 30 minutes. This is elegant and a delightful dinner party dish.

The roots may be dug in late fall and throughout the winter when the food source is stored in the large rootstock and heavy feeder roots. To obtain a flour, dry the cleaned roots thoroughly, cut them up, pound on the roots, and sift or strain out the fine talc. This flour may then be used for baking, making jelly, or concocting a drink. The drink is made by adding water, honey or sugar to sweeten, and a small amount of greenbrier flour. It’s not very good, and I haven’t been able to find out if it’s healthful or not! Surely it is good for something!!

When making jelly, only half the usual amount of sugar is needed. Full amounts produce a thick gel. The water turns a dark brown when boiled with the root. A simpler way to make jelly is to add honey, hot water and greenbrier flour, mix. When it cools it forms a jelly.

The greenbrier shoots may be placed in the dill crock. Check page 7.

It just goes to prove the old saying, “You can’t judge a book by its cover.” Judge this plant for yourself. It’s worth taking the time to become acquainted.
The carrion flower, with its smooth stem and many tendrils, is a high climbing vine. This common name is no doubt due to the foul-smelling flowers.

If the smell doesn’t prevent you from trying the plant, you are in for a pleasant surprise. The young end shoots snap off easily when gathered in spring or early summer. Boil the shoots in two waters for two minutes each. Salt and butter.

The roots are reputed to have qualities similar to the greenbrier.
The inner bark (cambium) of the willow contains a nutritional food to be used in emergency survival. The flowering buds may be eaten raw or put in a salad. The taste is not strong or disagreeable in any way and is a high source of Vitamin C. These small buds may be boiled as a vegetable and buttered. While the taste of the cooked bud is not really bad, it is hardly worth the effort of collection. It would, however, make a tasty dish if I were VERY hungry or surviving in the wilds.

The young willow leaves are also edible raw in a salad, with a reported vitamin C bonus that surpasses an orange ten times.

Another use for the willow twig was a cure for headaches. The substance found in the twig is the same thing we call aspirin. “Go chew on a willow twig” might be a medical solution for a pain in the head rather than a put-down insult from a pain in the neck!!!
BLACK WALNUT (*Juglans nigra*)

FLOWERS: April - May


HABITAT: Rich woods, base of slopes, valleys, streams, open woods, old fields

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: October - December

USES: Nuts, pie, bread, butter, pickle, candy, cookie

Anything that can stain as fiercely as walnut hulls must be protecting something precious or valuable inside. And, indeed, that is the case.

Black walnuts have a strong taste not pleasing to everyone. Personally, I find the nut positively delicious. I enjoy them fresh or used in baking.

Fudge candy, using black walnuts, is luscious. Remarkable Black Walnut Fudge is made by cooking 4 cups sugar, a 14½ oz. can evaporated milk, and ½ cup oleo to a softball stage. Add 12 oz. chocolate chips, 1 pint marshmallow cream, 1 t vanilla, and 1 cup black walnuts. Beat until the chips and marshmallow cream
are blended into the sugar mixture. Pour onto greased 13x9x2 pan. Cool and cut into squares.

Another tasty change is to use your favorite cookie recipe with black walnuts added.

I remember my folks would dump a couple bushels of black walnuts on the ground and drive back and forth with the car to mash the hulls. Then the nuts were left for a few days to dry out before collecting. Whether you try that method, or squash each nut individually with your foot and peel the hull off, be sure to wear gloves. The stain is indelible and wears off only in time. I understand that women used the hulls to dye their hair. I wonder how they kept the dye off their scalp, forehead and neck?

The nut is hard and difficult to crack. Using a hammer on a cement step or brick, give the nut a good crack and place shell and nut in a pie tin. Then, by using a nut picker, sort and pick out the meats.

A delicious walnut soup (enough for four small servings) is made by bringing 2 cups of chicken stock and 2 cups of Chardonnay or other dry white wine to a boil. Add 1 diced shallot, 1 tablespoon whipping cream, 2 teaspoons tarragon, ½ teaspoon thyme, and a dash of any or part of the following spices: salt, celery salt, cayenne pepper, white pepper, onion powder, dry mustard, fennel seeds, paprika, oregano, sage, and coriander. Boil for 4–6 minutes. Whisk in chilled butter (½ stick), a tablespoon at a time. Add ¾ cup toasted black walnut meats, ½ teaspoon each of garlic powder and parsley. This soup is good either hot or cold.

For pecan pie fans, substitute black walnuts for the pecans. It is different but still tantalizingly good. I prefer small pastry tarts filled with the black walnut pie filling. Heat your oven to 375 degrees. Beat 3 eggs, 2/3 cup sugar, ½ t salt, 1/3 cup melted butter, and 1 cup corn syrup with a mixer. Add ¾ cup black walnuts. Pour into pie shell or pastry tarts and bake for 40-50 minutes. A variation called Spicy Walnut Raisin Pie calls for the above recipe with these additions: ½ t cinnamon, ½ t nutmeg, ½ t cloves and ½ cup raisins.

Indians extracted oil by boiling the walnuts in large kettles and skimming off the oil from the top. They made butter from this oil.

Nut bread, be it banana, pumpkin, persimmon, etc., is enhanced with black walnuts. I have a pan waiting to be picked. I like these strong-tasting elegant morsels!!
HICKORY (SHAGBARK, Carya ovata) (SHELLBARK, Carya laciniosa)

FLOWERS: April - May


HABITAT: Shellbark: river banks. Shagbark in lowland or upland woods, slopes, dry upland areas

LOCATION: Shagbark, statewide; Shellbark, absent in Ozark region

COLLECTION: Fall

USES: Nuts

Missouri is the home of the world’s largest shellbark hickory. Big Oak Tree State Park boasts of one with a circumference of 12 feet 9 inches and a height of 122 feet!

I feel the nuts of these two trees are bettered only by the pecan. They must be collected in the fall and if you beat the squirrels to these delectable goodies you’ve performed no small feat!! One year I had my shagbark staked out, watched the abundant fruit crop grow, only to be outwitted by the squirrels who stripped both the tree and the ground of all good nuts. An ultimate blow to my ego is the fact that this saga has been sung more than once!
The nuts may be used in nut breads, pies, cookies or any recipe calling for nuts. They are particularly good in a cookie recipe called Sandies. Cream 1 cup butter, ¼ cup powdered sugar. Add 2 t vanilla, 1 T water and 2 cups flour. Mix well and add 1 cup hickory nuts. Shape into small balls and bake on an ungreased cookie sheet for 20 minutes in a 300-degree oven. Roll in powdered sugar while hot.

Another yum yum is Hickory Nut Pie. Merely use your favorite pecan pie recipe, or the one for walnuts on page 92, and substitute hickory nuts.

A friend of mine is convinced that all foods are improved with the addition of either mushrooms or nuts. With this in mind I tried Angier’s recipe for Hickory Nuts Corn. Whip two eggs, add 1 t salt, 1 T flour, 1 cup hickory nuts, 1 cup milk, 2 cups corn (fresh, frozen, or canned). Bake in a greased casserole at 350 degrees until mixture is firm. By golly, nuts do improve corn!!! Next I’m going to try Hickory Nut Meatballs, Hickory Nut Dumplings, Hickory Nut Broccoli, Hickory nut ... NUTS! I ran out of hickory nuts!!!
Acorns are a Missouri commodity one is not likely to have trouble locating. Knowing it would be a ready source of supply, I tackled the fruit of the oak trees.

I gathered the acorns from the white oak, which I had read were sweet kernels. One small raw taste was extremely discouraging. If this is sweet, my taste buds had just been fooled!! Another
bite, this time even smaller, made me decide I had the fruit of a bitter black oak. Closer checking in the Missouri Department of Conservation book, *Trees of Missouri*, let me know I indeed had the sweet white oak acorn.

Gibbons suggested that I boil the shelled acorns for two hours and change the water every time it looked tea-colored. This I did, along with keeping a pot boiling for instant boiling water baths. There is less likelihood of “setting” the bitter quality when the nuts do not get plopped in cold water and brought back to a boil. Therefore, boiling water is added to the meats as the old is poured off. Gibbons also says that the meats turn a chocolate brown and have no trace of bitterness. Anxious to see if all the unpleasant taste had been removed, I plopped an acorn in my mouth. By the time I finished spitting out the nut, I was ready to leave the edible for the squirrels! Considering the time I had spent picking, shelling, and boiling, I knew I had to continue. I boiled a bit longer and followed Fernald and Kinsey’s advice and soaked them in changes of cold water for 2 - 3 days. Some of the nuts I roasted in a 250-degree oven for an hour. By this time, my taste buds were becoming gun shy. However, it’s getting better!! A glaze is made from 1 cup sugar, ½ cup water, and a dash of cream of tarter and salt that comes to a boil. Dip the whole acorns in the liquid with tongs or tweezers and cool on wax paper.

The raw acorn kernels, when ground and mixed with boiling water, make a meal to be used in bread, muffins, or pancakes. The mixture is put in a jelly bag and the water squeezed out. This must be repeated several times to take out the bitterness. Put the thinly-spread meal on a cake pan or cookie sheet and bake in a slow oven until thoroughly dried. Regrind and try in your own recipe. Your regular cornbread recipe should be fine. My usual recipe is 1¾ cup white flour, ¼ cup acorn meal, ¼ cup sugar, 4 t baking powder, ½ t salt, 1 egg, 1 cup milk, ¼ cup shortening. Bake in a greased pan at 425 degrees for 20 - 25 minutes.

My appreciation for our early colonizers has heightened considerably!!
My experience has been a failure. I have located several hackberry trees, one quite large. I consistently checked the large tree for fruits. I never found any. Fernald and Kinsey tell me that the fruits remain on the tree all winter and were used by the Dakota Indians. They are reported as having the flavor of dates.

Ah, well, perhaps next year!!!!!

Next year I found them abundantly! They are small with a thick hide, large seed (for their size), and a small amount of sweet pulp.

Since my initial probe into wild edibles, I have found the hackberry often. The purplish-black berries do dangle on the tree all winter and provide a welcome nibble to passing hikers. The sweet taste of the fruit reminds us that the tree is also known as sugarberry.

The Dakota Indians were said to make a seasoning from the dried stones of the fruit.
MULBERRY, RED (*Morus rubra*)

FLOWERS: April - May

DESCRIPTION: A small tree; heart-shaped leaves, coarsely toothed; bark of older trees elm-like. Mulberry Family.

HABITAT: Rich woods, open rocky places, roadsides, fields, pastures

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: May - July

USES: Jelly, pie, fruit, drink, wine, vegetable

Fruit-laden mulberry trees are all over Missouri and very few people care about picking them. The red fruit is still green while the ripe berries are a purplish color. The mulberry, to my taste, is a very mild or bland flavor, but the berries are good for jellies. A straight mulberry pie is improved by adding lemon peel, finely grated, or substituting half of the berries with either blackberries or raspberries. This may be obtained by freezing either or both supplies as the berries do not often ripen at the same times. The results are quite good, however. Fill the pie crust with a layer of mulberries, a layer of either blackberries or raspberries, and repeat. Over the fruit sprinkle 1 cup sugar, 2 T flour, ½ t salt, and top with several pats of butter. Put on a top crust and bake for 45 minutes, or until brown, in a 375-degree oven.
The dried berry may be substituted for raisins or figs. To dry the berries, place them on a screen in a warm attic, or put them in an oven on “warm” with the door ajar for 15 hours or more. They may then be used in cakes, pies or muffins. My favorite use of the dried mulberry is in Mulberry Muffins. Blend the following: 2 cups flour (or substitute 1 cup for reindeer lichen, cattail pollen, etc.), ½ cup brown sugar, 4 t baking soda, 1½ t salt, 2 eggs, 1 cup milk, ½ cup liquid shortening, ½ cup dried mulberries, nuts if desired. Bake at 425 degrees for 20 - 25 minutes.

A surprisingly good drink is made from mulberry juice, lemon juice, sugar, Seven-Up and ice. The trick is in acquiring the mulberry juice while keeping the stain off your hands. I use the blender, a colander and a tea strainer and do a fair job.

Ben Harris has suggested a recipe worth trying if you are interested in making a mulberry wine. Gather berries and allow to dry for a day. Squeeze out the juice and to each gallon of juice, add a gallon of hot water, lemon peels to taste, and a small amount of cinnamon and sassafras bark. Over low heat, bring to a boil and continue for thirty minutes. For each gallon of liquid, add ¾ cup sugar and a pint of yellow wine. Let this set for a week, strain and cap.

A liqueur made from mulberries may be had by half filling a bottle with cleaned mulberries. Add either raw sugar or a cup of dissolved granulated sugar. Fill the remaining portion of the bottle with rum or bourbon and stash the bottle away for several months, at least three but the longer the better. Strain the contents and cap.

The young, tender shoots and twigs make a passable vegetable when boiled for 20 minutes in salted water and doused with butter — there I go again on the butter dousing!!

An attractive luncheon salad combines mulberries, bananas, peaches, sour cream and cottage cheese. Not only is it tasty, it is easily digested for those who have to watch their food intake.

With all of the uses noted thus far, we can surely do better than to curse the mulberry for its stain on sidewalks and clothes deposited there by the birds. Who says mulberries are for the birds, anyway?
NETTLES (Urticaceae)

STinging nettle, false nettle
(Boehmeria cylindrica)

wood nettle
(Laportea canadensis)

Tall nettle (Urtica dioica)

Clearweed (Pilea pumila)

FLOWERS: May - September
DESCRIPTION: Varies in species. Steyermark.

HABITAT: Rich thickets, roadsides, rubbish heaps

LOCATION: Statewide
COLLECTION: April - May
USES: Potherb

This might well win the title of “the most unlikely plant to be eaten.” It is a hairy plant that causes a stinging sensation when it rubs against exposed ankles, legs, or any skin. To look at the attacked area shows several welt-like, insect bites. Who would ever suspect this nuisance not to be hazardous to one’s innards!!!??

Although care must be taken in picking the nettles by using gloves and snippers, once this is washed and cooked or steamed it loses its defense and becomes a mild-mannered potherb. You should pick the shoots when they are not more than 6” to 8” tall. Cook for a few minutes and add butter.

The fibers of this plant are suggested to be the equal of flax for linen and the roots produce a yellow dye.
DOCK (*Rumex .. various species*)

**SOUR or YELLOW DOCK** (*Rumex crispus*)

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**CAUTION:** Handling this plant causes dermatitis in some people. See page 215.

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**PALE DOCK** (*Rumex altissimus*)
**SWAMP DOCK** (*Rumex verticillatus*)
**PATIENCE DOCK** (*Rumex patientia*)

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**FLOWERS:** April - May

**DESCRIPTION:** Large 6” - 12” leaves, most basal. Leaves on stem have paper sheath surrounding stem at attachment. Tall inflorescence of tiny flowers. Buckwheat Family.

**HABITAT:** Fields, gardens, waste ground, railroads, streams, ponds

**LOCATION:** Common species statewide

**COLLECTION:** March - April, shoots; July - Winter, seeds

**USES:** Potherb

Steyermark lists some 13 species of dock found in Missouri. To save my being confused I have discovered that all of the young leaves are edible as a spinach substitute. Dock is used with poke, lamb’s quarters, wild lettuce and dandelion to make a mess of spring greens. Unlike many of the greens that cook away, most dock holds its bulk. Most potherbs are cooked in two hot water baths and seasoned with salt, pepper, butter and vinegar.

Although I have not tried to make a meal from the dock seeds, I have read that western Indian tribes used the seeds in such a manner.