The United Nations World Food Program reports that 842 million people are undernourished in the world today—one in eight people. In the United States, “one in six people faces hunger,” (Feeding America.)

This booklet is a resource to help people find, identify, and prepare the food that may already grow in their community. Harvesting wild edible plants can also be a fun way to connect to nature.

The Girl Scout Gold Award represents the highest achievement in Girl Scouting; it recognizes girls who demonstrate leadership through projects that have sustainable impact in their communities and beyond. This booklet is part of Isa Meyer’s Girl Scout Gold Award project.

Common Edible Plants of Southern Wisconsin

Learn how to find, identify, and prepare 14 common edible plants.
From April through October here in Southern Wisconsin, we are surrounded by edible plants. It doesn’t matter where you live: edible plants can be found in the city, the country, the suburbs, and small towns. Once you know how to identify them, you can find edible plants almost anywhere.

It is legal and free to harvest edible plants from public land. You can also find them on private land like your backyard, the landscaping around your school or workplace, or a friendly neighbor’s land.

Plants are included in this booklet based on how common, nutritious, and easy to identify they are. Some plants are good tasting and safe to eat raw. These plants are underlined. Other plants must be prepared to be safe to eat or good tasting.

- If you are unsure of the identity of a plant, do not harvest it.
- Use the plant’s scientific name to find more images of the plant in order to identify it correctly. Gardeners and others with knowledge of plant identification can help you.
- Always ask permission before harvesting plants from private land.
- Never harvest plants from land that has been treated with pesticides or from land that was once an industrial area. If you are unsure, do not harvest plants from that land.
- Never harvest plants growing near a busy street or near the foundation of an old building.

**Autumn**

**Wild Grape** *Vitis riparia*

A climbing vine with large, lobed leaves and branched stems and tendrils. Small clusters of green flowers turning to dark purple grapes. Young leaves can be used in salads, boiled, or steamed. Grapes can be eaten raw, dried, or used in baked goods, salads, or drinks.

**Lamb’s Quarters** See page three.

**Sources**


Hassler, Frank. *Native Plants for Edible Landscaping*. Madison: Good Oak Ecological Services, PDF


“Common Dandelion plant” copyright 2013 by Peter M. Dziuk. “Garlic Mustard plant, about 2 feet tall”, “photo of seed pods”, “Common Blue Violet plant” by Katy Chayka. The following are licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons:

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**Autumn**

**Cattail** *Typha latifolia*
Tall, pointed leaves and cylindrical yellow and green flowers turning to hot-dog shaped, velvety fruits and then soft seeds.

Cores of young leaves and green portions of flowers can be eaten raw or cooked. Pollen and ground cores of roots can be added to flour.

**Common Burdock** *Arctium minus*
A bushy plant with oval-shaped, alternate leaves and ball-shaped, purple flowers turning to seeds covered in Velcro-like hooks. Undersides of leaves are covered in hairs.

Young leaves can be used in salads, boiled, or steamed. Roots can be boiled or roasted. Flower stalks can be peeled and eaten raw.

**Common Wood Sorrel** See page three.

**Elderberry** *Sambucus canadensis*
A large shrub with long, compound leaves and clusters of small white flowers turning to blackish red berries.

*Eating raw elderberries may irritate the stomach.* Berries can be eaten cooked, dried, or used in baked goods. Flowers can be used in salads, drinks, or added to baked goods. Dried flowers can be used as tea.

**Garlic Mustard** See page three.

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**Spring**

**Common Blue Violet** *Viola sororia*
Small plant with several branched stems and heart-shaped leaves with rounded teeth. Blue or purple flowers grow on stalks.

Leaves and flowers can be used in salads, boiled, or steamed. Dried leaves can be used as tea.

**Common Dandelion** *Taraxacum officinale*
A small plant with dark green leaves, a long, thin taproot, and single yellow flowers on long stalks.

Young leaves and flowers can be used in salads, boiled, or steamed. Roots can be dried, roasted, and ground to make flour or coffee substitute.

**Common Wood Sorrel** *Oxalis spp.*
A small, clover-like plant with heart shaped green leaves.

Leaves can be used in salads.

**Garlic Mustard** *Alliaria petiolata*
This plant has coarsely toothed, heart shaped leaves, white flowers in ball shaped clusters, and green or gray brown seed pods. This plant smells like garlic.

Young leaves, flowers, seeds, and pods can be used in sauces, dips, and salads.

**Lamb’s Quarters** *Chenopodium album*
A large plant with large angular lower leaves and narrow, pointy upper leaves and long clusters of small green flowers. Stems are covered in hairs, young leaves with gray powder.

Tips and young shoots can be boiled, steamed, or used in salads. Seeds can be ground and added to flour or cereal.
Spring

Red Mulberry *Morus rubra*
This tree has dark red-brown bark, a rounded crown, and both heart shaped and mitten shaped dark green leaves. Ripe berries are purple.

Berries can be eaten raw, dried, or used in baked goods, salads, and drinks.

Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*
A large plant with tassel-shaped flowers and toothed leaves that grow in pairs along a four-sided stem. Stinging hairs cover the entire plant. Wear gloves!

Simmer shoots and small, upper leaves in water to destroy the stinging hairs. Boiled leaves can also be used as tea.

Summer

American Red Raspberry *Rubus strigosus*
A prickly shrub with white flowers turning to red berries. Pale green, compound leaves have small hairs on whitish undersides.

Berries can be eaten raw, dried, or used in baked goods, salads, or drinks.

Cattail See page six.

Common Burdock See page six.

Common Purslane *Portulaca oleracea*
This low plant has fleshy, teardrop-shaped green leaves and thick stems that form a mat on the ground.

Young shoots can be used in salads, boiled, or steamed. Stems can be pickled. Seeds can be shaken from dried plants and added to cereal or ground and added to flour.

Common Wood Sorel See page three.

Dandelion See page three.

Garlic Mustard See page three.

Lamb’s Quarters See page three.

Red Mulberry See page four.

Saskatoon Serviceberry *Amelanchier alnifolia*
This small tree has elliptical leaves with saw teeth and white flowers turning to clusters of dark reddish blue berries.

Berries can be eaten raw, dried, or used in baked goods, salads, or drinks.