

EDIBLE, MEDICINAL, & UTILITARIAN PLANTS

Volume I: "Weeds" & Common Plants



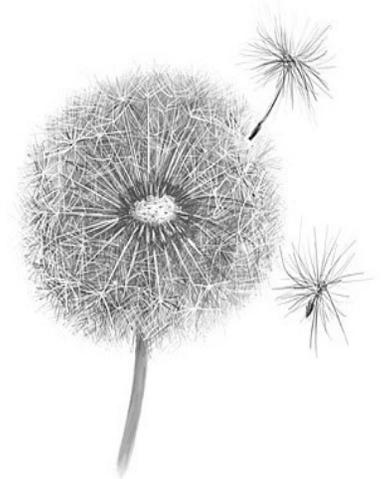
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with Harun Highmountain, MD.

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Introduction

Plants are incredible, and plants are everywhere. Even those who live in the crush and clamor of cities can find a huge variety of edible, medicinal, and otherwise useful herbs among the plants commonly called "weeds" by the uninformed. And for those fortunate folks who inhabit the rural areas of the world, an astonishing diversity of plant life continues to grow and thrive, despite the massive destruction of plant habitat worldwide.

For hundreds of thousands of years, we crafty human beings have been using plants with great efficacy to feed and heal ourselves, and to fashion tools in various forms. Despite this, as urban (civilized) humans have become further and further removed from their landbases, the knowledge of edible and utilitarian wild plants has become nearly extinct, and the belief that plants are useless as medicine has become commonplace. Such ignorance- disturbingly universal and constantly perpetuated by Western industry and science- is unforgivable and easily remedied.

With that in mind, this zine is the first in a series of publications written to inspire anarchists and non-radical folks alike to reconnect with the amazing world of plants. Hopefully, upon reading this and subsequent works, the reader will never again look down upon that dandelion breaking through the concrete as a mere weed, or the clover and mallow overtaking grass lawns as nuisances.

Before continuing, I should point out the necessity for caution when harvesting wild plants. Where applicable, I have listed and described potential toxic and deadly lookalikes to the useful plants below. However, although I have many years of the study of herbalism under my belt, I am by no means a master of the science and art of medicinal plants, and there are many plants I don't know. So, if you're ever in doubt as to the nature of a plant's toxicity, err on the side of caution and don't consume it. Consult at least two

reputable sources (whatever the fuck that means) before using unknown plants.

As a final note, I must mention the concept of ethical harvesting. Ecosystems the world over are in peril due to the omnipresent destruction brought about by industrial civilization. Thus, plantlife in its many forms is in a perpetual state of suffering and extinction. Species disappear every day, and it's up to every one of us dissidents to stop the killing.

The point is that when we harvest plants we must do so ethically, to avoid hastening the annihilation of our plant cousins. This entails doing and not doing many things. For example, only harvest from stands where there are multiple plants growing. Harvest deadfall and plant matter already removed from or shed by the plant. Harvest in such a way that the plant is not killed and its growth not impeded. Only uproot plants when you need the root itself. Never harvest more than you need. Be conscious of the ecosystem around the plant you're harvesting. Ask the plant (not necessarily with human language, but in your heart and mind) if it's okay to harvest it. Smell, touch, examine, and taste the plant before harvesting, get to know its spirit and its place in its ecosystem, and feel the rightness or wrongness of harvesting it. Vow to the plant (and, really, to all plant and animal life) that by using it you will help ensure its future existence (and mean it). Make sure to actually work toward the future existence of the plants you use, both by fighting the forces killing the world and by physically planting and nurturing more of those plants. When you physically consume the plant, thank it for its sacrifice and for the healing and nourishment it gives you.

~Rowan WalkingWolf

Suggested Reading

Peterson's Fieldguide to Medicinal Plants & Herbs: Eastern/Central
Peterson's Fieldguide to Medicinal Plants & Herbs: Western

These guides are superb resources for the medicinal herbs of North America, although they are very biased toward Western science/industry/government. The *Western* edition is difficult to find for some reason, even on the website of the publisher.

Medicinal Plants of the Pacific West by Michael Moore

Michael Moore is a master herbalist, though reading this book, one can easily confuse him for a comic. His snarky, clever commentary makes this book a pleasure to read, and the information within is invaluable for those who wish to learn pacific medicinal herbs.

Tom Brown's Guide to Wilderness Survival

Tom Brown's Guide to Living with the Earth

Tom Brown's Guide to Wild Edible and Medicinal Plants

Tom Brown's an ass, plain and simple. Don't buy his books. In fact, don't buy anything. Ever. But do steal them, and study them—they are treasuries of information on the ways in which plants are used culinarily, medicinally, and functionally. His *Edible and Medicinal Herbs* is not my favorite plant book, and it's certainly not the most comprehensive, but his writing illustrates the personality of each plant and provides memorable stories about his interactions with these plants. This makes remembering what each plant is used for, where they grow, and how and when to harvest them much easier than reading academic texts like *Peterson's*.

Primitive Toothcare: a DIY Guide to Uncivilized Oral Hygiene

by Rowan WalkingWolf

This is another of my zines, available for free on Yggdrasil Distro's website (yggdrasildistro.wordpress.com). Several of the plants listed herein reference this zine and the toothsticks and other primitive methods of oral hygiene that it explores.

Herbs & Shrubs

Catnip, Catmint (*Nepeta cataria* & spp.) Pg.29

Catnip is a common wild and cultivated member of the mint family. Like many members of the mint family, it contains strong calmative effects, providing relaxation and soothed nerves when drunk in tea or ingested orally. This lovely herb also aids rough digestion, as do other mints. Catnip is famed for its intoxicating effects on felines (hence the name), but lesser known are its intoxicating effects on human beings. Catnip is also an excellent toothache reliever when chewed and held on painful teeth.

I can testify to both catnip's effectiveness as a toothache plant and its intoxicating principles. Not too long ago, one of my wisdom teeth was powering its way through my gums and I badly needed relief. I harvested some catnip from a neighbor's yard, and, over the course of several hours, I ate countless catnip leaves and drank who knows how many cups of catnip tea. Not only did the pain subside greatly, but I was also overwhelmed by a feeling of general euphoria and giggly idiocy. It's a lot of fun, and I highly recommend it, especially for those who can share the experience with a feline companion.

Cattail (*Typha* spp.) Pg.29

These wetland grasses as among the most easily recognizable, most widespread, and most useful plants in all the world. Cattail has been called the "supermarket of the swamp" and the "Super Wal-Mart of the swamp" by respective redneck sources. The sentiment is true enough, though equating a plant to a supermarket or to a giant, industrial, community-killing wholesaler utterly disgusts me. Suffice it to say that cattail is a magical and worthwhile companion.

Cattail is identified by its brownish spike raceme, or corndog-like top thingy. Its other parts resemble large grass.

Many parts of cattail are edible to humans. The rhizomes, or roots, are starchy and delicious, nutritious and energy-rich. In late spring, the bases of cattail leaves are young and tender, and can be eaten raw or cooked. In early summer, the developing flower spike can be broken off and eaten like corn on the cob. By mid-summer, when the male flowers are mature, cattail pollen can be gathered and used as a flour supplement or thickening agent.

Cattail has a multitude of medicinal uses as well. The root can be poulticed and used on cuts, wounds, scrapes, burns, stings, and bruises, as well as scabs, inflammations, and smallpox pustules. The ash of burned cattail leaves can be applied to wounds as an antiseptic and styptic.

Moreover, as if its edibility and healing properties were not enough, cattail has myriad uses in practicing primitive skills. The straight stalks, when dried, can be used as spindles in starting friction fires and as the shafts of arrows. The downy material of mature cattail heads can be used as tinder, and as insulative lining in moccasins, bedding, diapers, clothing, sleeping bags, and pillows. The leaves can be woven into everything that requires weaving: clothes, baskets, mats, backrests, chairs, shelters, beds, hats, and so on. Like mullein, the dry seed heads can be dipped in animal fat and burned as torches.

Cleavers, Goosegrass, Stickywilly, Stickyweed, Catchweed,

Zhu Yang Yang (*Galium aparine*) Pg.30

Cleavers are an aptly named plant, as their tendency to cleave to anything fibrous (including skin) illustrates. Its clingy nature also ensures that goosegrass travels everywhere humanity does, with the exception of Antarctica. Thus, it is found on every habitable continent. Cleavers are an excellent source of vitamin C when eaten or taken in tea form. Eating the plant raw is uncomfortable, as the toothed leaves tend to cling to the mouth, but it can be boiled to make it more palatable.

Diaphoretic: substance that promotes sweating.

Digestive: something that encourages digestion.

Diuretic: increases urination.

Emenagogue: substance that promotes menses.

Emetic: substance that induces vomiting.

Emollient: something that softens and soothes skin.

Expectorant: any agent that dissolves thick mucus and is used to relieve respiratory complications. These agents bring up mucus from the lungs, bronchi, and trachea.

Galactagogue: agent that encourages milk flow in lactating women.

Infusion: Tea. Infusions are made by steeping plants in hot (but not boiling) water. Infusions usually involve soft plant matter, like leaves, flowers, seed pods, and soft stalks.

Laxative: a mild purgative.

Poultice: Herbs mashed into a soft, paste-like mixture. Usually done by chewing fresh herbs, or by crushing herbs in a vessel and mixing with saliva or water. Poultices are applied topically.

Purgative: induces watery movement of the bowels, usually with painful cramps.

Sedative: something that induces sedation, or calm, by reducing excitement and irritability. Opposite of stimulant.

Stimulant: a substance that encourages physiological and mental activity in the body. Opposite of sedative.

Styptic: a substance that checks bleeding from wounds.

Tincture: alcoholic extract of plant compounds. This zine is more concerned with infusions and decoctions than with tinctures.

Tonic: substance that reinvigorates and restores. Also used to describe plants used to promote general health and well-being.

Toothstick: a stick chewed and brushed with to encourage oral health. Please see *Primitive Toothcare: a DIY Guide to Oral Hygiene* available for free on the Yggdrasil Distro website.

Vermifuge: agent that expels parasitic worms from the body.

Vulnerary: substance that heals wounds; a curative.

Wash: using an infusion/decoction topically. Also, something we crusties don't do very often.

Glossary

I've done my best in the previous pages to use the simplest language possible, not only to help novice herbalists understand the nature of these plants but also because I hate overly verbose medical jargon. However, I've probably used a few big medical words herein. Plus, many other herbal medicine texts and teachers use terms that beginners may not understand. For all these reasons, here is a simple glossary of terms:

Abortifacient, Abortive: a substance that induces abortion through one of several means.

Analgesic: a pain killer.

Anti-inflammatory: a substance that reduces inflammation, thus relieving pain.

Anti-bacterial: helps prevent bacterial infection.

Anti-fungal: helps prevent infection/infestation of fungus

Anti-septic: an anti-bacterial substance applied to living tissue that reduces the chance of sepsis or putrefaction.

Anti-spasmodic, Spasmolytic: suppresses spasms or muscle contractions.

Anti-tussive: prevents coughing.

Astringent: a substance that shrinks or constricts body tissue.

Calmative: a mild sedative; agent that calms.

Caminative: a substance that prevents internal gas formation or aids in the expulsion of said gas.

Decoction: the boiling of woody plant matter- that is, roots, bark, and stems- to extract beneficial compounds. Decoctions differ from infusions in that they involve hard plant matter that is boiled, rather than soft plant matter that is steeped in hot (non-boiling) water.

Decoctioning herbs usually takes between 5-30 minutes, depending on the desired potency and the plant matter itself.

Cathartic: a powerful purgative, causing severe anal explosion, with or without pain.

Demulcent: agent that soothes irritated mucous membranes.

In terms of medicine, the plant is used to treat liver and bladder problems, ulcers, urinary problems, tonsillitis, hepatitis, and cystitis. The plant has a mild laxative effect, it stimulates the lymphatic system, it is used as a general detoxifier in treating cancer, and the fresh plant and juice can be used to treat wounds and a multitude of skin problems, like psoriasis and eczema.

The dried seeds of the plant can be ground into an excellent coffee substitute, and a decoction of the root produces a red dye. When left alone cleavers often grow into huge tangled thickets. Such thickets, when harvested, make excellent insulation for primitive shelters, as they cling together and to other materials, and can be stuffed into small spaces in great density.

Clover (*Trifolium spp.*) Pg.30

Clover is a delightful little plant, often considered a weed and frequently overlooked as an edible and medicinal plant. First and foremost, the plant's beautiful flowers are edible and delicious. With over 300 species worldwide, there are quite a few shapes, sizes, and colors of clover flower to choose from. The leaves of clover are also edible, in raw form when young, and boiled or steamed for 5-10 minutes when older. The entire plant is high in protein and other nutrients.

All species are important to wildlife and insects, and clover is also ecologically crucial because it fixes nitrogen in the soil and contributes to a healthy nitrogen cycle, which, in turn, leads to healthier ecosystems and plants in general. In this capacity, it is often used as a ground cover with other food crops that thrive on its ability to fix nitrogen.

Clover is used medicinally to treat skin problems like eczema and psoriasis. It is particularly good for treating children's skin ailments, but has some degree of effectivity in treating adults. Clover infusions are good at treating coughs and bronchitis, and especially in

remedying whooping cough. Taken internally, clover purifies the blood, and helps combat cancerous growths of the stomach and elsewhere.

Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale* & spp.) Pg.31

Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) Pg.31

Comfrey, while a wondrous plant, is perhaps best not at healing but at illustrating the fallacy and intentional harmfulness of industrial "science." The Food and Drug Administration here in the U.S. banned the use of comfrey in commercial pharmaceuticals a couple years ago after concluding it is unsafe for human consumption. This farcical analysis is based on a study in which the alkaloids found in the plant were extracted, concentrated in huge amounts, and injected into rats who then died of liver failure. This is farce first because rats are not humans, and therefore rat testing does not reflect human consumption of a given substance. It is also a misleading conclusion because the alkaloids found in any plant (carrots, tomatoes, coffee, or potatoes, for example) will cause liver failure in mammals when heavily concentrated.

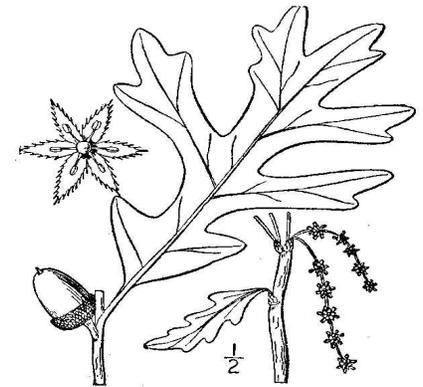
My point in mentioning all this is that comfrey has an undeserved negative reputation based on some very shaky research. In the realm of non-industrial, non-Western science, however, comfrey has been used for its astonishing healing powers for thousands and thousands of years by human beings without adverse effects. The root tea and less-potent leaf tea are used as a general tonic, and to treat diarrhea, dysentery, bronchial irritation, coughing, vomiting of blood, and "female maladies." The leaves and root can be poulticed to heal fractured and broken bones, to promote the healing of wounds, bruises, and ulcers, and to help relieve sore breasts. Root tea and leaf tea can also be used with great potency to heal fractured and broken bones.

Warning: some people (I don't really know any, but several good sources say this is true) apparently confuse comfrey for foxglove

Yucca

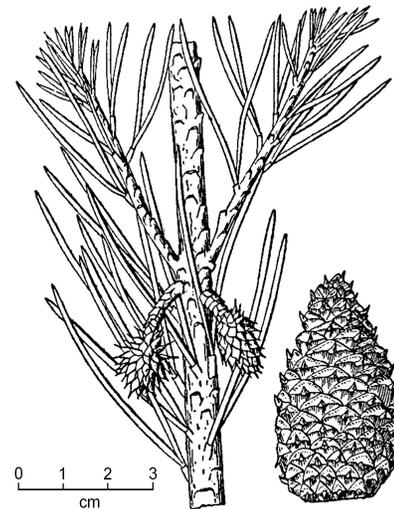


Oak



* Acorns!
* Distinctive leaves

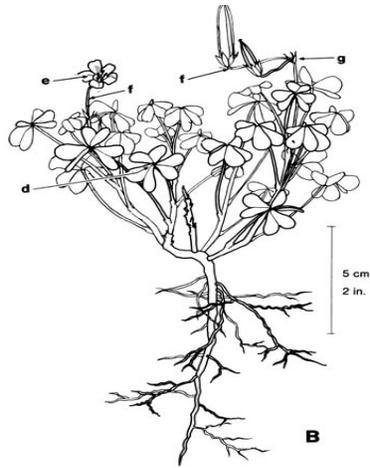
Pine



Willow



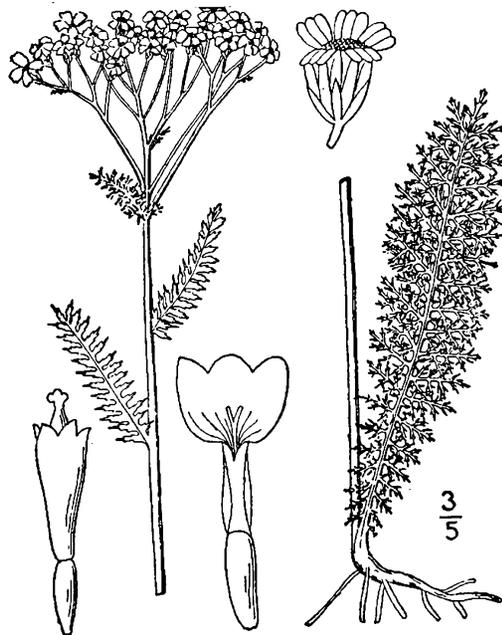
Wood Sorrel



Sheep Sorrel



Yarrow



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(digitalis purpurea). Whereas the toxicity of comfrey is largely rumor, foxglove will, indeed, kill the shit out of an adult human being. Foxglove has much larger, showier pink and/or white flowers and tends to grow in straight, upright stalks. Comfrey, on the other hand, tends to grow in dangling bunches of small pink or white flowers on bent stalks, and usually has larger leaves than foxglove. Make sure to properly identify comfrey before consuming.

Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* & spp.) Pg.32

False Dandelion, Catsears (*Hypochaeris radicata*) Pg.32

To be candid, every time I hear someone scornfully talk down the magnificent dandelion as a weed or pest, I want to punch that person. A lot. *Taraxacum officinale* and the related *T. erythrospermum* are found worldwide, making dandelion an important plant for novice and expert herbalists alike.

Every part of the dandelion plant is edible. The leaves, while bitter when eaten raw, can be boiled for 5-10 minutes to increase edibility. The roots can be chewed, eaten raw by the adventurous, and cooked as a woody root vegetable. The flowerheads are edible raw, making them an excellent spring snack or a brilliant addition to a wild salad. The leaves and flowers are abundant in vitamins A and C.

Dandelion's importance as a medicinal herb should not be underappreciated. The fresh root taken in tea form helps detoxify and purify the liver, kidneys, gall bladder, and bladder, and helps to fix ailments with these organs. Root tea also promotes bile flow and weight loss. The dried root, though perhaps slightly weaker, has the same effects. Dried dandelion root can also be ground and used as a delicious coffee substitute.

Dandelion has the same effects on the soil in which it grows as it does on the liver and kidneys. It purifies soil, sucking up toxins and emanating positive compounds. So, when harvesting dandelion,

make sure the soil you're plucking it out of isn't contaminated with lots of toxic nastiness. This is especially important for those dwelling in cities, where dandelions are generally most toxified. The detoxifying nature of dandelions, coupled with their universality and ease of growth, makes these plants very beneficial in permaculture initiatives.

Pretty much everywhere dandelion occurs, a remarkably similar plant known as cat's ear, catsear, or false dandelion (*Hypochaeris radicata*) also thrives. Catsear has somewhat darker, glossier, rounder, hairier leaves (i.e.- more like a cat's ear), and the leaves tend to grow in basal rosettes close to the ground. Catsear has long, thin, solid, forked stalks with several flowers to a single plant, whereas dandelion's stalk is singular and hollow. All parts of catsear are edible, and the dried root can be used as a coffee substitute like dandelion.

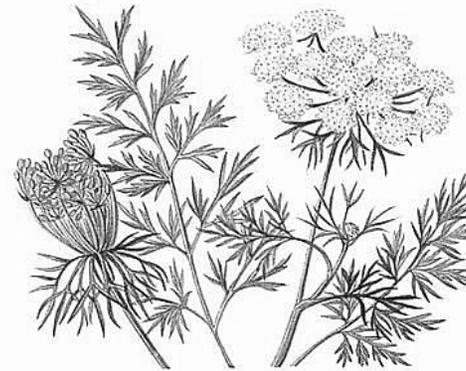
Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*) Pg.32

Fennel grows like fire spreads in a dry pine forest. That is to say, really freakin' fast. It is a tall green plant in the umbelliferae family, and looks like many other umbelliferous plants. Fennel has distinctive yellow flowers and lacy, feathery leaves. It can grow quite tall and wide. Fennel is closely related to dill.

Fennel is entirely edible and is revered throughout the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East, and Italy for its flavor and desirability in cooking. Every part of the plant, when chewed, tastes like anise or licorice. Some love this taste, others despise it, and it seems very few people are indifferent to fennel's powerful taste and aroma. The flowers, leaves, and bulbs can be prepared in just about any way and in any dish, but they can also all be eaten raw.

Fennel is used medicinally in a number of different ways. The seeds can be eaten and all parts of the plant can be made into tea to relieve excessive gas and to promote milk flow in new mothers.

Wild Carrot, Queen Anne's Lace



- * "Bird's nest"
- * Hairy stems
- * Purple/red flower in middle of flowerhead
- * Green stems

Poison Hemlock



Conium maculatum.

- * Purple spots on stems
- * Leaves stink when crushed
- * No bird's nest
- * Smooth stems

Water Hemlock



[REE]

- * Grows near water
- * Plant stinks
- * No bird's nest
- * Smooth stems

Rose



Babies stricken with colic and/or vast fartiness can be treated with fennel. Fennel tea has a great calmative effect on upset stomachs and intestines, and aids tremendously in difficult digestion. Some people suggest consuming fennel improves eyesight. Fennel tea can be applied directly to the eyes as eyedrops or as a compress, which reduces inflammation and soreness in the eyes.

Besides these uses, fennel plays a crucial role in primitive tooth care and general DIY oral hygiene. The seeds can be chewed to encourage fresh breath, healing of connective tissue (gums), and to assist in cleaning the teeth. All parts of the plant can be consumed to promote oral health and to combat halitosis. The semi-woody stalks of older fennel plants can be used as flimsy toothsticks. For more on primitive toothcare and how fennel plays into it, please see my zine *Primitive Toothcare: a DIY Guide to Uncivilized Oral Hygiene*, also available for free from Yggdrasil Distro.

Stinging Nettles



As a note of warning: many members of the *umbelliferae* family look alike, and some of them are deadly. Please don't confuse fennel for poison hemlock (*conium*). This plant has yellow flowers, while poison hemlock's flower are white. For a description of poison hemlock, see the section on Queen Anne's Lace/Wild Carrot.

Grass (not pictured)

Grass is everywhere, and is easily identified. Grass is often ugly, invasive, destructive to native ecosystems where it doesn't belong, and prolific in spreading and choking out native plants. However, even with its expansive and destructive tendencies, this universal plant has its uses.

Most species of grass are edible to human beings. Grass certainly isn't the tastiest of wild foods, but it's enough to provide nutrients and keep one alive in survival situations. After removing the tough, fibrous coating, grass seeds are easily eaten and digested. Grass blades/leaves are also edible, though they tend to cause indigestion

and stomach turmoil if consumed in great quantity.

Although it has use as food, grass is arguably most useful because of its utility in building shelters and making tools. Bundles of dried grass straw are used in making thatched dwellings and, really, anything else that requires thatching. Hats and clothes can be made of dry grass straw, and clothes and other objects of warmth that are already functional can be stuffed with dry grass for better insulation. Dry grass makes passable tinder and kindling, and is good bedding for primitive shelters. Grass can be coiled and sewn (using grass thread) into coiled grass baskets, which, if done with great care, can make watertight bowls and cookware. Long strands of slightly twisted grass make the poorest quality useable cordage, and strips of grass can be used as a very low quality sewing thread. Sewing with grass blades is used primarily to keep things to bound together until a better thread can be made or found.

Lavender (*Lavandula spp.*) Pg.33

I can't praise this plant enough. It is gorgeous in all its forms; its fragrance has no comparison. Lavender is native to the Mediterranean, northern Africa, and India, although its desirable qualities cause humans to cultivate around the world. Lavender often escapes cultivation and rewilds itself in a number of climates and bioregions, and it can be found in just about every part of the world, making it a worthwhile plant for beginning herbalists to study. The plant is easily recognizable in its varied forms, some of which flower lavender and dark purple in color, and others of which are white or pinkish.

Lavender is a soothing plant, plain and simple. Its scent alone is enough to quiet shattered nerves and mental unrest, although infusing the flowers, leaves, and stalks makes a potent calmativ tea. A word of caution: too much lavender will knock you out. Drinking too much lavender tea too early in the day makes for drowsiness and lack of focus, due to the plant's strength in relaxing. For this reason,

Narrowleaf Plantain

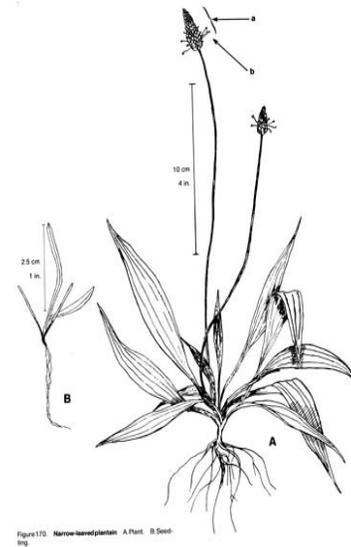


Figure 170. Narrowleaf plantain. A. Plant. B. Seedling. C. Younger seedling, top view.

Broadleaf Plantain

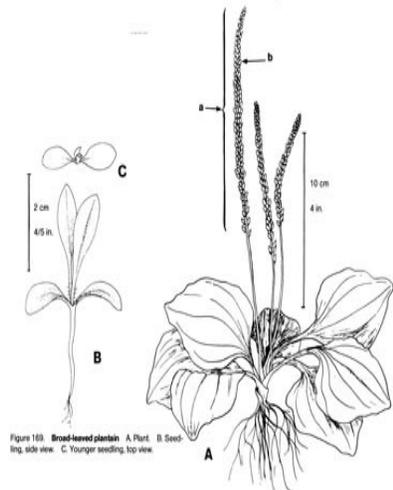


Figure 169. Broadleaf plantain. A. Plant. B. Seedling, side view. C. Younger seedling, top view.

Blackberry



Raspberry



Mints

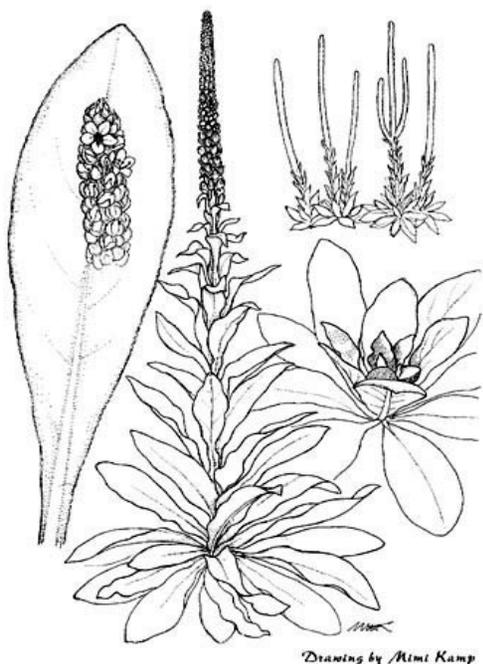


lavender can be used as a sleep aid, best taken shortly before trying to sleep.

Lavender also comes in handy for relaxing tense or bruised muscles. The essential oil, rubbed on topically, works best in this regard, but a topical wash of lavender infusion works nicely too. Essential oil or infusion rubbed onto the temples greatly relieves headaches and migraines. Because of its anti-inflammatory principles, lavender can also be used to lessen the pain and swelling of insect bites, and it can be applied to acne and burns to induce healing.

Lavender stems are strong and somewhat pliable, and in a pinch can be used as makeshift cordage to bind things together.

Mullein



Lemon Balm, Melissa (*Melissa officinalis*) (see Mint Pg.34)

This member of the mint family takes its name from the Greek for "honey bee," because it attracts and nourishes these creatures. Lemon balm has properties similar to all other mints, and has the square stem indicative of the mint family. Its appearance is overall quite similar to the domestic and wild mints, though it can be distinguished and identified by its roundish toothed leaves and overpowering lemon scent. Even a casual rubbing of the leaves or stalk produces the characteristic lemon smell that gives this plant its common name. Melissa grows everywhere, especially as an invasive weed in North America.

Lemon balm, like other mints, is a strong calmative. An infusion of the leaves, flowers, and stalks brings about a sense of relaxation and is a tried and true reliever of stress. Dried or fresh leaf tea has also been used as a folk remedy for fevers, painful menstruation, headaches, colds, insomnia. As with other mints, lemon balm can be taken internally to treat headaches and fevers, but is also effective as an external wash on the affected regions.

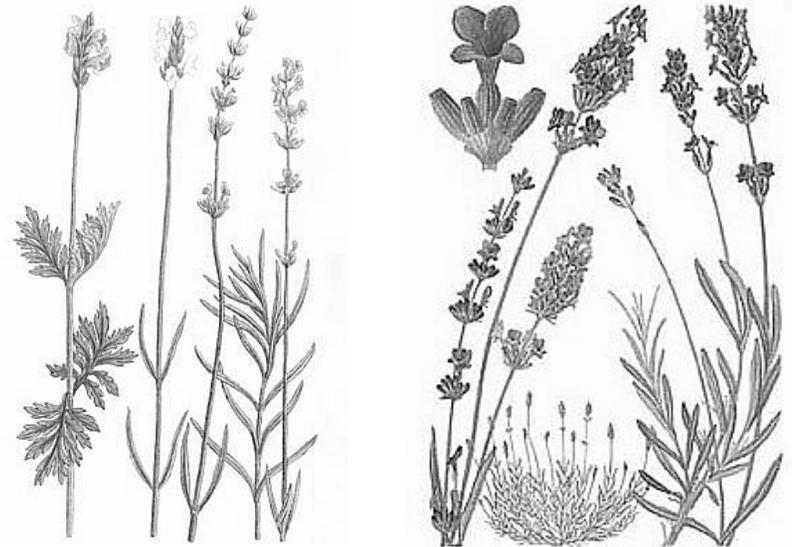
Perhaps most interestingly, melissa fiercely combats the Herpes simplex. I have oral herpes myself, and can attest to this plant's efficacy in beating back cold sores and lessening their pain when present. To treat herpes, use a poultice of the fresh plant or apply infusion topically and internally. This remedy also holds true for other viruses, like Newcastle disease and mumps. Lemon balm is also a general antibacterial and antiviral agent.

Mallow, Marshmallow, Cheeses, Cheeseweed Pg.33
(Malva neglecta, M. sylvestris, other Malva spp.)

To some extent, all of the plants in this volume grow everywhere. But mallow seriously grows *everywhere*. The two most widely distributed species are *M. neglecta* and *M. sylvestris*, both of whom are known by a variety of names involving the word mallow, and both of whom are native to Europe, Africa, and Asia. There are countless other species of mallow almost as widespread and invasive as these two. All mallow species are characterized by their hairy, wavy, distinctive leaves, pink or white 5-petaled flowers, and cheese-like fruits that give them the names "cheeses" and "cheeseweed." Several species of mallow, particularly those who grow in marshes, are called "marshmallow," and, indeed, this plant is where the sugary monstrosity known as marshmallow originates.

This plant is often a destructive weed, but, fortunately for humanity and the planet, it is edible, delicious, and has medicinal and functional uses. The entire plant can be eaten raw or cooked. The roots, when chewed and eaten, become silky and sweet and taste of marshmallows. Because of the healing compounds and mucilage contained within the root, and because its soft nature makes it a pleasure to chew, mallow taproots make superb toothsticks. The leaves and seedpods are also edible, and highly nutritive. I ate mallow seeds for the first time while writing this today, discovering how choice and nutrient rich they are for myself. I recommend them highly.

Lavender



Mallow



Dandelion

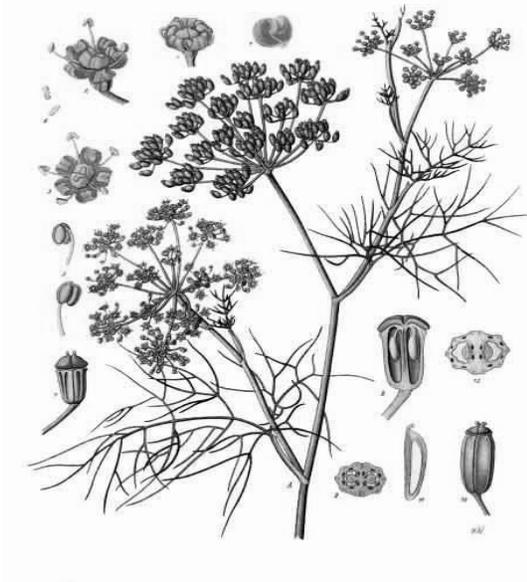


False Dandelion



- * Hairy, rounded leaves
- * More than 1 flower per stalk

Fennel



The mucilaginous nature of mallow makes it an excellent soup thickener, throat coater, irritated mucous membrane soother, and digestive system aid. Leaf and root tea can be used internally for coughs, bronchitis, and stomachaches, and makes a good general mouthwash. The leaves can be poulticed on wounds and tumors to promote healing.

Mint (*Mentha spp.*) Pg.34

Most people are familiar with spearmint and peppermint, two of the more common domesticated members of the *Mentha* family, but few people are familiar with wild mint, *Mentha canadensis*, which is North America's only native mint. All *Mentha* species share similar medicinal uses, and are easily identified by their square stems, opposite leaves, and strong scent and flavor of mint.

The leaf tea (stalks and flowers are okay too) of mint has traditionally been used to treat colds, fevers, indigestion, gas, stomachaches, headaches, nausea, vomiting, nervous tensions and stress, and insomnia. Mint infusions can also be used to stop spasming and to treat cramps. In other words, mint is tremendously calmative. In treating headaches and fevers, mint should be taken internally and used as an external wash over the afflicted areas. Peppermint, like lemon balm, is an active antiviral, showing skill in combating herpes, Newcastle disease, and other viruses. The essential oils that give mint its healing ability are extremely volatile. As such, take care when preparing mint infusions, as too much infusing/decocting tends to destroy and evaporate the oils.

In addition to its medicinal qualities, mint is entirely edible and one of the tastiest plants in existence. It can be eaten in salads, as a raw green, made into a variety of sauces and chutneys, and included as a spice in many foods. The pungent aroma of mint also acts as aromatherapy in large amounts, and can impart medicinal stress relief without internal consumption.

Mullein, Beggar's Blanket, Flannel Plant, Jupiter's Staff

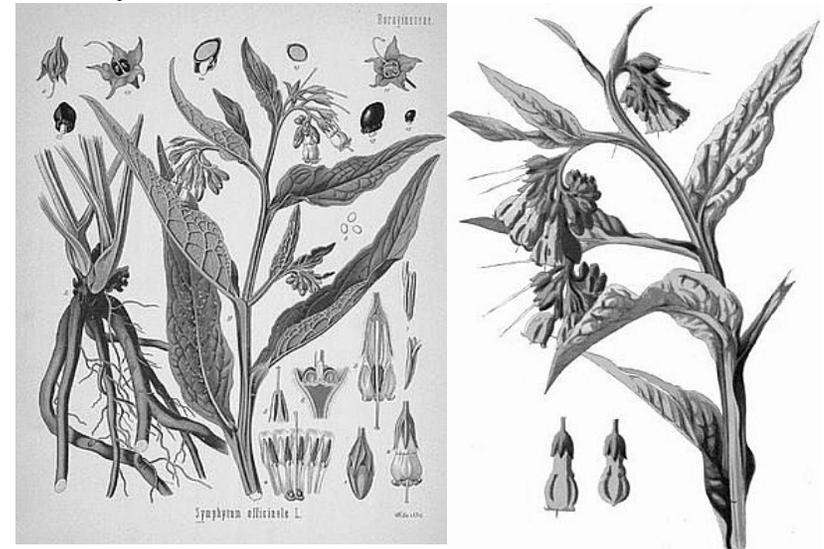
(*Verbascum thapsus* and spp.) Pg.34

Mullein is one of the very first plants I discovered in my lifelong plant medicine journey. It is a powerful and ever-present healer, and it has a number of utilitarian applications as well. Mullein grows in many places, particularly in damaged and just plain crappy soil, such as that of waste sites and clear cuts, and along roadsides. Identifying mullein is easy, but the plant grows in two year cycles and differs according to which year-cycle it's in. First year mullein is a little basal rosette of furry pale-green leaves. In its second year, mullein shoots up a straight central stalk that sprouts out huge furry leaves, yellow flowers, and eventually seeds. Mullein dies after its second year-cycle.

Mullein is hella mucilaginous. As such, fresh or dry leaf tea aids the throat, mouth, and lungs, and other mucous membranes. Dried mullein leaves were smoked by many first nations peoples of north America to promote a healing coughing for the lungs and throat. The leaf and flower tea was traditionally utilized to treat asthma, bronchitis, kidney infections, and coughs. Flowers soaked in olive or mineral oil have been used as earache drops. Mullein seeds are narcotic and should not be ingested, unless you're fond of sickness and potential death.

Mullein's uses as a tool are many. The long stalks are extremely straight, and are composed of a harder outer layer and softer inner layer, making them ideal spindles for friction fire making. I use mullein hand drills on red cedar hearthboards with good success, despite the months of practice it took to build up the strength necessary to make a coal. Mullein stalks can also make mediocre arrows, good because they need no straightening and they're light, not so good because they're weak and are easily split. The leaves, as the diversity of folk names implies, are superb insulation, very similar in texture to flannel. They can be stuffed inside one's clothes or sleeping gear for added warmth, and they can be fashioned into

Comfrey

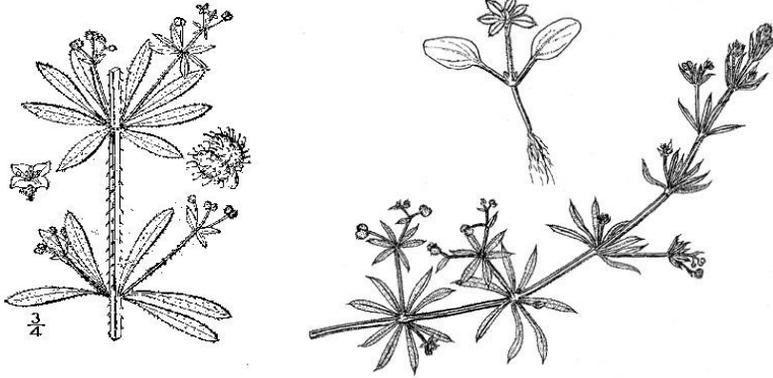


Foxglove



- * Large flowers in upward stalks; on comfrey, flowers grow in curling drupes at the ends of stalks
- * Flowers spotted inside on foxglove
- * Comfrey has long stamens that protrude from flowers

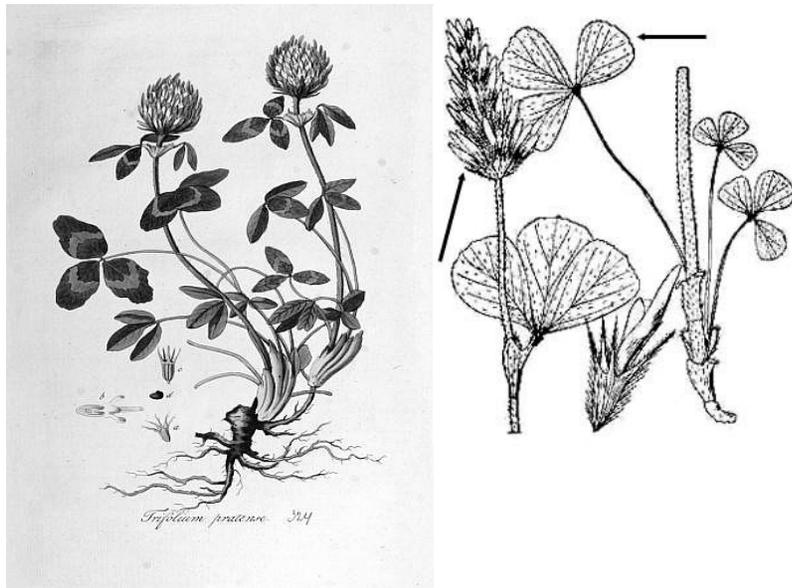
Cleavers



- * Clings to just about anything
- * Grows furiously fast in a number of soils

Clover

- * Shamrock-like leaves



makeshift blankets by piling them atop oneself. These leaves make great bedding in primitive shelters when added as the topmost layer of ground insulation. The leaves are also highly flammable when dried, and can be used as tinder and as candle wicks. The stalk can be fashioned into a torch by coating the seedhead-end with gobs of animal fat or vegetable oil and igniting. Mullein torches are beautiful and very satisfying. The flowers of this lovely plant can be boiled to produce a yellow dye, which is sometimes (according to one source) used to dye hair a golden color. I have no experience with this, so feedback is welcome.

Plantain (*Plantago spp.*) Pg.35

These innocuous plants include about 200 species that can be found in every part of the world, rural and urban. In fact, the two most common varieties here in North America, broadleaf or common plantain (*P. major*) and lance or narrow leaf plantain (*P. lanceolata*), are found in colossal numbers in and around cities. For you city dwellers, this plant is invaluable, and for those who live in less populated areas, this is still one of the most amazing plants you'll encounter.

As far as I know, all species of plantain are edible. I've only eaten broadleaf and lanceleaf plantain, as they're the only plantains where I live, but I've never found information indicating any of the distant species are toxic or unpalatable. The leaves are slightly bitter and very healthful, and have been eaten as a wild food by human beings since at least as far back as 6500 BCE, according to some California researchers. These small, leafy green herbs should not be confused with the banana-like plantain, which is also edible but entirely dissimilar to these plantains.

Medicinally, plantain is a powerhouse. One of its easiest and most accessible remedies is for bug bites: a poultice of the leaf when stung or bitten by an insect does wonders for the pain and swelling. Equally simple is plantain's use as a vulnerary and styptic herb.

Poulticed on scrapes, sores, gashes, other wounds, and bruises, plantain helps stop bleeding and instantly promotes healing. Leaves of the lanceleaf varieties can be fashioned into primitive band-aids with the following method: begin by poulticing a leaf on the afflicted area, then, once the initial plantain is in place, wrap one or more leaves around the finger and tuck them back into themselves. The broadleaf plantains can be used in the same fashion by using the long stalks of the plant, grass blades, cordage, or some other binding agent to keep the "band-aid" in place. (Thanks to Dr. Highmountain for the Plantain Band-aid.)

Plantain poultices also aid with a number of skin disorders, blisters, burns, swelling, sprains, eczema, cracked lips, poison ivy (and probably poison oak?), diaper rash, other rashes, and boils. These poultices apparently also aid in drawing out splinters and thorns, though I have no personal experience with this.

Besides all its topical uses, plantain infusions grant tremendous healing benefits as well. Plantain leaf tea is a general detoxifier for the body, but be careful with this as plantain growing in cities will more often than not toxify the body by consuming it. Leaf tea also gives aid to colds, the flu, asthma, emphysema, bronchitis, fevers, hypertension, bladder problems, gas, ulcers, irritable bowels, sinusitis, coughs, kidney stones, intestinal chaos, irregular menstruation and cramping, congestion, diarrhea, and in stabilizing blood sugar in diabetics. Plantain fucking rules.

Raspberry and Blackberry (*Rubus spp.*) Pg.35

Being commercial food crops throughout the world, I think these plants are pretty self-identifying. With their delicious berries and far-reaching distribution comes a list of important medicinal benefits.

Raspberry is a mighty healer for women during menstruation,

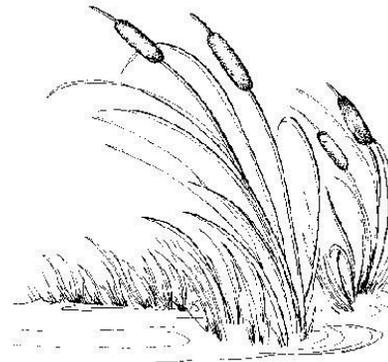
Plates, Pictures

Catnip



- * Pink flowers
- * Distinct catnip smell
- * Square stem of mint family
- * Very mint-like

Cattail



- * Corn dog-like spikes
- * Grassy in appearance
- * Grows in wet areas

The bark and leaves are both used for their salicylic acid. The proper time to harvest willow branches and leaves is any time between November to May. Extracting the medicine involves decocting the branches and leaves for roughly 15 to 30 minutes. This is powerful medicine, and should be used only when it is called for. It is used to treat fevers, aches, headaches, and influenza.

On the rare occasion I get terribly ill, willow is the plant I turn to, and it's a life saver. During an anarchist bookfair in Olympia, I was doubled over, laying in the dark for two days, freezing and burning up, in constant pain and sore from sleeping for so long, and my head was throbbing. When the bookfair was over, I made it back home and made myself a well-steeped willow brew. I instantly felt better, though foggy and slightly numbed. I repeated this treatment 4 times a day for 2 days and felt almost entirely renewed.

Willow is also valued for its flexibility and durability. It has traditionally been favored for weaving wicker baskets, wicker backpacks, wicker fences, making fish traps, and integrating into waddle and daub structures. Willow shoots, when encouraged to grow straight, make very good arrows.

Willow is exceptionally good at finding and seeking out water sources with its roots. It's also skilled at forming new roots on cuttings. Thus, willow can be used as a tool of ecological sabotage. That is, by taking cuttings of willow and planting them near or above water sources (including pipes and sewer systems), willow will sprout roots and eventually tear up concrete and asphalt. Willow can also be decocted to make a rooting hormone that, when poured on other cuttings and seeds, encourages the growth of roots.

pregnancy, and childbirth. The leaf tea has been used for thousands of years to lessen and subdue painful menstrual cramps, and several of my female-bodied friends report it works well for this purpose. Raspberry leaf tea tones the uterine and pelvic muscles, which facilitates easier labor, making it an invaluable aid for soon-to-be mothers. Raspberry leaf is also a galactagogue- not only a super-fun word, but also a promoter of milk flow in new mothers. Blackberry leaf and root tea is often used as a female tonic, though it is less potent than raspberry in that capacity.

Blackberry, while not as potent in aiding female ailments, shares several other medicinal qualities with raspberries. The leaf tea of both blackberries and raspberries can be taken to alleviate diarrhea, dysentery, and rebellious tummies. Both are also good healers of oral thrush (yeast infection of the mouth), gum infections, sore throats, and general mouth sores, although blackberry is much stronger for mouth-related afflictions. Blackberry leaf/root tea can be used as an external wash for sores, ulcers, and boils. Blackberry root tea is said to treat gonorrhea and back pain.

When I'm stricken with a fierce bout of diarrhea, blackberry is always the first plant I turn to. This is probably because it's really good at what it does and partially because I live in the Pacific Northwest where Himalayan blackberry has conquered every inch of ground where forest used to be (I take some small pleasure in killing parts of this invasive monster, all the while thanking it for its gifts). I also resort to blackberry for upset tummies quite a bit, relying only on fennel more frequently than this plant.

Rose (*Rosa spp.*) Pg.36

The genus *rosa* includes over 100 species of flowers. Roses are highly praised and valued worldwide for their appearance, and, in some cases, their fragrance. Most everyone in the world has probably seen a rose, though few people know of their non-aesthetic values.

Rose flowers are edible and are high in vitamin C. The fruit of the rose, known as a rose hip, is also edible, delicious, and contains huge amounts of vitamin C. Both the petals/flowers and the hips can be made into tea. Rose hips contain antioxidant flavonoids with known anti-inflammatory qualities. Thus, infusions of rose hips can effectively treat joint stiffness and pain. Rose hips have also been used traditionally to remedy influenza-like infections, diarrhea, and a variety of urinary tract infections (UTIs), as well as sore throats, runny noses, bronchitis. Rose hip tea promotes liver and kidney health, aids the kidneys in eliminating toxins, relieves constipation and sluggishness, and has a positive, uplifting effect on the nervous system, lessening insomnia, depression, and fatigue.

Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) Pg.36

Those unaware of nettle's amazing gifts relegate this plant to being an irksome, pain-inducing weed. Nothing could be further from the truth. It's true that nettles sting, and that the stings hurt... sometimes like hell. But, with a little education, harvesting nettle is easy and is more than worthwhile.

There are two methods for harvesting this plant that I'm aware of. The first is to cut or otherwise sever the stalks and leaves from the roots. Once killed, these parts of the plant take about 20 minutes to an hour to lose their potency, and can usually be handled without stings. There is the occasional super-stinger that still manages a nip after two weeks of drying in a bag, though.

The second method for harvesting nettles involves harvesting them fresh. The spines on top of the leaves rarely sting, so, the first step in gathering fresh nettle is to pinch the top of a leaf and fold the two undersides over onto each other. This sandwiches the stinging spines together, neutralizing their ability to sting. Then, the leaf is plucked off of the plant, being cautious to avoid drawing the stalk or other living leaves into one's skin. Once plucked, fresh leaves can be gathered in a receptacle, or they can be eaten raw. In order to eat the

Oak wood is insanely strong, and was favored by many native peoples for tool making and as bow wood. Oak is also the traditional wood used in fashioning English long bows, confirming its use in native self-bow bowyering. Oak can also be used to make somewhat heavy but long-lasting arrows. Oak branches and twigs make wonderful toothsticks, given their astringency and durability.

Pine (*Pinus spp.*) Pg.39

These needle-bearing conifers are native to most of the Northern Hemisphere, but they have been introduced into many parts of the Southern Hemisphere where they are now invasive. Pretty much anywhere you go in the world, you're sure to find pine trees.

Pine needles contain absurd amounts of vitamin C. Decocting them lightly yields a tea much higher in vitamin C than several oranges and with a unique piney taste. The needles can also be twisted together and sewn into coil baskets, as with grasses, and they can be used as arrow fletching when feathers aren't available.. Pines also drip abundant quantities of sap, which can be harvested and made into pine pitch. Pitch is used for hundreds of applications, gluing things together with natural, primitive materials among them. Many pine species produce edible seeds, known as pine nuts or pinyon nuts (after one species of pine with coveted nuts). These nuts have been staples of native American societies, and I highly recommend them.

Willow (*Salix spp.*) Pg.39

The medicine willow provides is phenomenal. Its medicinal properties come from the salicylic acid pervading its limbs (this also gives willow its genus name: *salix*). Salicylic acid is the precursor to aspirin, and has been used by many cultures in the past. All native American groups who lived where willow trees grow used them as staples of their medicinal regiment, and in terms of civilized peoples, the Greeks, Assyrians, Sumerians, and Egyptians were known users of willow medicine.

Trees

Oak (*Quercus spp.*) Pg.39

Oak trees are found everywhere in the Northern Hemisphere, and are easily recognized by their leaves and acorns. Traditionally, acorns were staple foods of many first nations peoples in North America, especially in the eastern woodlands. Acorns contain huge amounts of tannins (tannic acid), which is what gives them their bitter, astringent taste. So, in order to eat acorns, tannins must be leached out. This is done by boiling shelled acorns in several changes of water, or, as the natives did, by letting the acorns sit in a moving body of water for several days. Once leached of tannins, acorns provide tremendous amounts of fat and protein, and can be eaten raw or ground into a nutritious flour-ish meal (apparently, a handful of acorns has the same fat and protein content as a pound of hamburger). The acorns of the white oak can often be eaten raw without leeching.

When I process acorns, I prefer boiling them in changes of water. I save this tannin decoction and use it throughout the year for many things. Tannic acid is extremely astringent, which makes it a fantastic topical wash for acne, poison-ivy rash, burns, and other skin ailments. I also use acorn tannin juice as a mouthwash, as tannins help tighten connective tissue (gums), combat mouth sores, and generally promote good oral health. Those who suffer from chronic diarrhea and dysentery will benefit greatly from consuming the acorn tannins or a tea of the inner bark.

More than any of these medicinal functions, I use acorn tannin juice to tan hides. There are many plants from which tannins can be extracted, but oaks and their acorns have ridiculously high concentrations of tannic acid, making them ideal for tannin extraction and tanning hides. I prefer acorn tanning to brain tanning, not so much for the result as for my lack of desire to touch brains.

freshly-plucked leaf, continue pinching the two undersides together, and fold the leaf over on itself again and again until it's in a little squarish package. Then, place the nettle parcel on your bottom molar, remove hand from mouth, and chew. Chewing leaves in this way crushes the spikes and removes their ability to sting. This method is mostly foolproof, but does result in the occasional not-so-horrible sting in the mouth.

Besides raw consumption, nettle has a long history as a foodstuff for human beings. The leaves and stalks can be boiled to tenderize them, and are then eaten as a potherb. Eaten raw or cooked, nettles are fantastically rich in iron, vitamins A,C, D, and K, potassium, and calcium.

This abundance of nutrients gives stinging nettle a legion of medicinal effects that are worth noting. (Unless otherwise noted, the medicinal uses of nettle come in the form of leaf tea or tincture.) Perhaps chief among these is nettle's importance to women and female-bodied people. Nettle's high iron content restores and strengthens the blood, particularly useful for those whose bodies have been drained of iron due to ongoing or recently-passed menstruation (and, you know, stab wounds and internal bleeding). Due to its absurdly high nutrient content, nettle guards against excessive bleeding and strengthens fetuses, making it an invaluable aid during pregnancy. It is said to ease pains during labor, and it stimulates milk production and flow in lactating women.

Besides its benefits for female bodies, nettle has a variety of other uses. Its iron content combats anemia and fatigue. It has a very gentle promotional effect on the lymphatic system, augmenting the excretion of wastes through the kidneys. The act of urticating oneself- that is, intentionally stinging certain areas of one's body with nettles- has been reported to aid and even cure arthritis, bursitis, rheumatism, gout, and tendonitis. According to a study by the National College of Naturopathic Medicine in Portland, nettle is

super-effective in treating hay fever, asthma, seasonal allergies, and hives. Apparently, Australians have used nettles for many, many years to treat asthma, and it's just catching on as a remedy in other parts of the world.

There have been several studies in Germany suggesting high success rates in treating enlarged prostates and prostate cancer with nettle root. Nettle is also good for encouraging oral health, effectively inhibiting plaque and gingivitis. Washing one's hair with nettle tea helps stimulate growth and restore original hair color.

In addition to its medical qualities, nettle is also a very utilitarian plant. The stalks, due to the high concentration of iron, are very stiff and fibrous. This makes nettle a superb cordage plant. I won't describe the full method of making cordage here, but understand that nettle fibers are usually best gathered in autumn when the plant is strongest but has not yet seeded and dried. The inner fibers of nettle stalks are weak and pithy, and are discarded, instead using the hard outer layers. Nettle cordage is beautiful, and, as evidenced by its use by hundreds of different native communities here in North America and elsewhere, it is very durable.

Wild Carrot, Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*) Pg.37

Poison Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) Pg.37

Water Hemlock (*Cicuta maculata*) Pg.37

Wild carrot is the precursor of the domesticated carrot, and, as far as medicinal herbs go, is indisputably more valuable. The root of wild carrot, like its domesticated relative, is edible, and is best uprooted and eaten in its early life. These roots can be eaten raw or cooked, and the older roots, which become much woodier and more impenetrable, usually have to be cooked. Evidently, the flowers are also edible and can be eaten raw or fried into a kind of fritter, though I have no experience with either.

Wild carrot is valuable as a wild food, but its most outstanding and

be used in hundreds of applications. The leaves of yucca can also be woven into baskets, mats, sandals, and clothes which also have tons of uses. Yucca species with sharp pointed leaves can be used as needle and thread by stripping off long strands of the leaves still attached to the sharp point. Or, the sharp points themselves can be removed from yucca leaves and used as tiny awls.

When flowering, most yuccas send up a long, straight shaft from the center of the plant. These shafts are hard and durable, and have a number of uses. They can be used as spindles in starting friction fires, although materials softer than yucca are more desirable. They also make passable arrow shafts, and usually require little or no straightening.

The leaves, roots, and stems of many species are toxic and paralyzing to fish and other creatures. Several native groups would put the pounded roots of Adam's Needles (*Y. filamentosa*) and Soapweed (*Y. glauca*) into water to stupefy fish who would then float to the surface.

Another of yucca's many stellar uses is its ability to clean. As the name of *Y. glauca*- soapweed- suggests, yucca can be and has been used as a soap by human beings. Every part of the plant can be used for its soapiness, with the root being the most potent provider. To make yucca soap, pound or decoct the root in a tub. The leaves can also be pounded and lathered, as can the central stalk. I've never tried the flowers, but I'm sure they provide some degree of soapiness.

Yucca is not only remarkably functional, but it provides food as well. The flowers of most species are edible, and in parts of Central and South America, they are used in traditional cuisine for their bitter flavor. Many yuccas also bear fruit which is edible to human beings. The indigenous communities of the southwestern North American desert would collect and dry these fruits for winter. The newly developing stalks can be peeled and eaten. The seeds of yucca can be ground to produce a coffee substitute or flour-like meal.

wounds of his soldiers. This seemingly unimposing little plant has over 100 biologically active compounds as identified by Western science, and nearly that many uses in traditional and modern herbalism. Varieties of yarrow with white flowers are thought to be the most powerful, though the pink, red, and yellow varieties are potent healers in their own right.

As its other common names "soldier's woundwort," "nosebleed," and "staunchweed" imply, yarrow is a fearsome styptic, or blood stopper. Every part of the fresh herb is used to check bleeding, even heavy bleeding from gaping wounds, and the plant can be dried and ground into a styptic powder without equal. Sticking a fresh leaf up the nose will stop nosebleeds, though sticking fresh leaves up the nose when nosebleed is absent *causes* nosebleeds. This plant also encourages healing in wounds and abrasions. Ingesting yarrow infusions heals mild to severe bruising, colds, influenza, and problems with the circulatory, digestive, excretory, and urinary systems. Like ginger, yarrow intensifies the effects of other medicinal herbs taken with it. Yarrow helps eliminate toxins from the body, and has been reported throughout the years to aid in just about every ailment known to humankind not listed above.

Yarrow is also entirely edible. The leaves were apparently favored as a potherb in the 17th century, and the flowers are edible, too. Yarrow is one of the best and most unappreciated wild foods.

Yucca (*Yucca spp.*) Pg.39

These spiky companions grow in the dry regions of North America, Central America, and South America, and they're planted everywhere by yuppies with ornamental landscapes. This is excellent, considering how insanely useful these plants are.

Above all else, yucca is primarily useful as a cordage plant. The leaves are incredibly fibrous, and, when pounded and scraped, yield long, soft, strong fibers that can be twisted into cord, which itself can

unique contribution to humanity comes in its medicinal properties. For tens, possibly hundreds of thousands of years, wild carrot has been used as an emergency contraceptive. Taken internally, the seeds of queen anne's lace act as implantation inhibitors (meaning they prevent fertilized eggs from attaching to the cell wall of the uterus), which makes them a type of primitive morning-after seed. Accounts vary as to how much wild carrot seed to use, and understandably so: different women, different bodies, different dosages.

All things considered, fertile women seeking contraception should eat 1 teaspoon to 1 handful of wild carrot seeds no later than 8 hours after exposure to sperm, preferably as soon as possible. This dose should be followed by at least two more the same day, and some sources advise continuing ingestion up to 10 days following risky sex. Many sources containing information about queen anne's lace innumerate the ways in which you can purchase the seeds. This is fucking absurd. QAL grows everywhere in the world, and is at its most flourishing in waste places and urban and suburban areas. Harvesting enough seeds in the autumn to last the whole year is no problem at all, requiring just a handful of plants to relinquish the countless seeds found in their characteristic "bird nests."

The only catch to this whole process is that it relies on women knowing when they're fertile. Because women are so totally disempowered in our society, most are never taught to chart their cycles, or, better, to learn how to listen to and feel when their bodies are in a state of fertility. However, learning about one's fertility is extremely important, not so terribly hard, and beneficial to those who are and are not sexually active. Many books on the subject of Fertility Awareness exist, but the only one I have read and can recommend is *Taking Charge of Your Fertility* by Toni Weschler. For those unwilling to or disinterested in learning Fertility Awareness Method, several sources on wild carrot seed's suggest taking them throughout each cycle as a means of contraception.

Besides its contraceptive uses, wild carrot can be used medicinally for several purposes. Infusions of the leaves are used to prevent cystitis and kidney stones, and to treat already formed kidney stones. Wild carrot leaves contain porphyrins, which stimulate the pituitary gland and lead to increased release of sex hormones, as well as stimulating the uterus. Infusions of the plant can encourage delayed menstruation, and help to induce uterine contractions. Infusions of wild carrot also support the liver, bladder, and kidneys, and they help somewhat with digestive disorders.

Wild carrot looks a hell of a lot like some of the deadlier members of the parsley/carrot family of which it is a part, specifically poison hemlock and water hemlock. Wild carrot is distinguished by several obvious features: 1. very hairy green stalks ("Queen Anne's leg hair"); 2. a tiny purple or red flower in the center of the flower umbel (sometimes absent); 3. roots, leaves, and seeds that smell and taste of carrot; 4. characteristic "bird's nest" seed heads~ no other members of the parsley/carrot family curl up into bird's nests when they've seeded. In contrast, poison hemlock and water hemlock are identified by: 1. hairless stalks; 2. purple spots and splotches on stalks; 3a. leaves emit an unpleasant, mouse piss smell when crushed (poison hemlock); 3b. plant stinks (water hemlock); 4. no "bird's nest" when plant goes to seed. Please consult several sources, preferably competent herbalists, before harvesting what you think might be wild carrot.

Wood Sorrel, *Oxalis* (*Oxalis* spp.) Pg.38

Sheep Sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) Pg.38

The *oxalis* genus encompasses about 900 species of plants very useful to human beings. Many of these are known as "wood sorrel" or "common wood sorrel," though no member of this genus is a true sorrel. Rather, they are called sorrels because they resemble the unrelated Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) in their acidic taste.

This taste comes from the high concentrations of oxalic acid found in members of this genus, many of which are edible. In particular, creeping woodsorrel (*O. corniculatum*) and common woodsorrel (*O. acetosella*) are found in many parts of the world and make a tasty addition to salads or pungent snacks on their own. In South America, the potato-like Oca (*O. tuberosa*) is found in cultivation and growing wild, and is harvested and eaten like any root vegetable. Almost all *oxalis* species are identified by their three-leaf-clover appearance, and, as such, are frequently known as "shamrocks" or "false shamrocks." *Oxalis* flowers come in many shades, including white, pink, and yellow. Almost all have green leaves, excepting *O. regnellii*, which has violet or maroon leaves.

Sheep sorrel, which is totally unrelated to the *oxalises*, is found just as universally as those plants. It is characterized by its arrow shaped leaves and oxalic taste. It is also entirely edible, cherished by some for its unique flavor. Sheep sorrel is in great abundance in fields, waste grounds, urban areas, and areas where soil is exceptionally acidic.

For medicine, wood sorrel leaves can be chewed for nausea, mouth sores, and sore throats. Fresh leaves can be poulticed on cancers, old sores, and ulcers. The leaf tea has traditionally been used to calm fevers, treat urinary infections, and aid scurvy. Sheep sorrel has all the medicinal uses of wood sorrel, plus a few. The root tea of sheep sorrel is used for diarrhea and excessive menstrual bleeding. Consuming large amounts of any of these plants will probably result in oxalate poisoning, so be careful when consuming *oxalis* species and sheep sorrel.

Yarrow, Thousand-seal, Woundwort Pg.38
(*Achillea millefolium*)

Yarrow is an incredible plant. The Latin name reflects this: *achillea* is derived from Achilles, who, in his mythical adventures, was said to have carried yarrow with him to stay healthy and to treat the