

Wild Plants

We just need to get to know and appreciate her and nature will give us almost all we need! No need to be an expert or for special gear or permission.

But only gather plants you have safely identified! Pick/destroy only those plants and parts that you need. That way the plant can often live on. Don't gather more than 1/3rd of the population in one place and never in protected areas or protected plants. Steer clear of polluted areas: Where pesticides and fertilisers are used, near heavy traffic, (former) industry or intensive agriculture and so on. Only use plants that look healthy and are neither discoloured, heavily eaten by insects or full of parasites.

Tip: Most plants taste best and have the best/strongest effects when they are fresh and raw as opposed to dried! Leaves are often tastier and softer before the plant is flowering.

Here are a few plants with **Species:** Used parts. When to gather. How to use. *Dangers of confusion.*

Dandelion: Root, leaves, buds, flowers. Almost all year. Eat them raw or cooked, honey-like jelly from the flowers, „coffee“ from the roots; very healthy, many vitamins, minerals. Tea (from all parts): Sunny, light, grounding, strengthening, very diuretic, haematopoietic, blood and skin cleansing; activates metabolism, appetite, digestion, liver, kidney, gall; detoxifies, anti-inflammatory, helps with rheumatism, gout, allergies, headaches, depression. Put sap from the stem on warts or clavuses. Can show pollution, so don't gather where they grow *extremely* densely. Confusion with cat's-ear harmless.

Daisy: Whole plant. Almost all year. Very tasty. Helps with psychological or physical trauma, sunny, diuretic, blood and skin cleansing, cough releasing, anti-inflammatory, heals wounds, strengthens immune system. Helps with asthma and the cold.

Plantain (narrowleaf or broadleaf): Leaves, young flower stands (still green and tender), seeds. All year. Edible raw or cooked, tastes mushy. Tea/syrup for cough, expectorant, grounding, calming, nurturing, strengthening. Put crushed/chewed leaves on insect bites, wounds, pimples, cold sores, anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, heals wounds, haemostatic, skin cleansing, alleviates itching, astringent. Seeds soaked in water make a cooling gel that alleviates pain (externally); internally (not too much) helps with digestive troubles.

Chickweed: Whole plant except root. Almost all year. Very tasty, healthy (vitamins, minerals), strengthening, skin cleaning and healing, alleviates

itches, expectorant, cooling, digestive, diuretic; helps with hordeolum sty. Don't confuse with *lesser spurge* (Chickweed doesn't have milky sap) or scarlet pimpernel (has red instead of white flowers, angular stem; chickweed stems are round and have a single line of hairs)

Ground Elder, Goutweed: Leaves, stems, flowers, seeds. Spring until autumn. Very strengthening, healthy, purifies, detoxifies, diuretic, helps with rheumatism, gout, cough, antispasmodic, anti-inflammatory, helps with insect bites (externally), alleviates pain. Foot bath. Don't confuse with other white flowering plants from the *carrot family (Apiaceae)*! There are a lot of those, some amazing medical plants, some deadly poisonous, like hemlock! Don't judge by the flowers, look at the leaves and the triangular stem.

Clover (Red, White): Leaves and flowers. Spring and summer. Leaves contain protein, flowers are tasty and decorative. Helps the stomach and liver, alleviates coughing, blood cleansing, antispasmodic, helps with skin irritations, during menopause. Could be confused with sorrel/lemon clover, also tasty, but contains oxalic acid, so don't eat too much and not if you have gout or rheumatism. Removes stains.

Stinging Nettles: Whole plant, esp. shoot apex. Leaves are most tasty in spring and summer, before they flower, afterwards, gather the seeds. Raw (in a smoothie), fried, cooked, very tasty, nutritional, healthy: Lots of iron, vitamins, minerals and protein. Strengthens immune system (also figuratively), self esteem, blood; blood cleansing, diuretic, grounding, strengthening, alleviates allergies, exhaustion, menstrual pains, gout and rheumatism. Good for skin and hair. Use gloves. Are rendered harmless through drying, heating (no matter how), crushing. Don't use excessively. Can be used to make ropes and textiles. Tee/slurry is a very good fertiliser!

Grass, Reeds and Cattail: edible are: soft grass (leaves/stalks); young reed shoots and sap, marrow from reed/cattail-shoots in spring; green cattail cobs while flowering and flowers in May/June (in a pinch also later); grass seeds in (late) summer, when they're almost ripe (differs from type to type), reed seeds also during winter; cattail roots (also bulrush) in autumn, winter, spring, reed roots all year. Cattails are good for tinder, the pollen as flour. Grass has lots of vitamins, minerals, chlorophyll and even contains protein. Just chew and spit the fibres out again or make juice. Don't use excessively. Strengthens, helps gut flora, immune system, blood, detoxifies; externally: helps wounds/burns heal, skin cleansing. Only use sweet grasses (round stems), don't use poisonous *sedge* (angular stems) – just don't eat anything that tastes bad. Be careful: *Ergot* is a very poisonous black/dark brown fungus that

grows on grass seeds. Don't confuse reed/cattail with the leaves of poisonous *lily/iris*! Be mindful of animal and bird habitat while gathering. *Be careful with everything gathered from standing water – boil as there's danger from bacteria!*

Birches (possibly also maple and young beeches) can be tapped for sap in early spring (when the leaves are just beginning to bud). Be careful not to harm the tree too much! Birch bark can light a fire, be used as tinder, even when wet. Birch cambium (green “bark“ below the white bark) is edible. Birch twigs can be chewed and used as a toothbrush. Birch leaves can be used all year (while they grow), they are tasty in salad when young, later as a spice or tea. Birch is diuretic, energising, detoxifies, helps with rheumatism, gout, arthritis.

Linden leaves are edible and tasty all year round. Flowers and fruits also edible. Linden flower tea activates the body's defences, helps if you have the cold or fever, helps sleep, helps with stress and panic, diuretic, antispasmodic; pulverised linden- or birch coal helps with diarrhoea.

Willow bark (all year) can be chewed or used as tea to alleviate pain, headaches (same active ingredient as Aspirin), inflammations and fever – *don't* use during pregnancy, lactation or if you have stomach problems.

Spruce needle tea or bath helps with the cold, cough, rheumatism, but *not* if you have asthma or a weak heart. Also good as a jelly.

Young, freshly budded, light green **leaves/needles** of these trees are edible in spring: Linden, birch (also buds), beech (also seedlings), maple, fruit and nut trees, willow, oak (also flowers; but be careful, the leaves grow poisonous later as are all other plant parts), fir, spruce, pine, larch. If you're not sure whether or not the leaves/needles are young enough to eat, just try if they taste good to you. *Caution: Yew (coniferous tree) is deadly poisonous !*

Seeds/fruits from these trees (and more) are edible: cornel cherry, rowan/ mountain ash/ quickbeam, blackthorn/ sloe, sea-buckthorn, hawthorn/ whitethorn, beech (only use small amounts or heat them), pine, linden, maple, acorns (from last year) only after carefully getting rid of the tannin through watering and boiling repeatedly (throw away water each time).

Elder: Flowers, cooked berries. Flowers in spring, berries in late summer/autumn. Very important medical and protective plant! Many minerals, vitamins. “For and against everything!“ Tea or hot juice/soup helps with the cold, cough, flu (diaphoretic), constipation, headache; strengthens the body's defences; diuretic, warms, calms, protects, nourishes. Don't eat the *berries raw, instead cook for 10-20 min and sieve seeds. Unripe*

berries, leaves, bark etc. are poisonous, but you can make whistles out of the twigs. *Dwarf elder/danewort is poisonous* – doesn't have wood, is smaller, berries are upright (elder berries hang down!), leaves narrower.

Yarrow: Leaves, flowers, flowering plant. Spring until autumn. Edible, in salad, soup etc. Very good medical plant, helps with digestion, appetite loss, menstrual pains; haemostatic, blood cleansing, heals wounds, anti-inflammatory, bactericidal, astringent, antispasmodic, calms, can be used like chamomile. Not during *pregnancy*, can make you *light sensitive* if you used a too high dosage or if used externally. Don't confuse with other white flowering plants from the *carrot family (Apiaceae)*! Don't judge by the flowers, look at the leaves (“Brow of Venus“). Could be confused with young leaves of *golden buttons*.

Mugwort: Leaves, shoot apex, flower buds. Spring/summer (best before the flower buds open). Use as spice, incense, tea. Old and highly respected shaman and medical plant. Opens perception, closeness to nature, stimulates dreams, protective plant, boosts body's defences and circulation, casts out what makes you sick, pathogens, intestinal worms. Helps digesting fat, boosts appetite, helps with fever, strengthens the stomach; purifying, detoxifying, strengthening, antispasmodic, regulates menstruation, helps with fertility – but don't use during *pregnancy*! Repels Insects. Don't confuse with the poisonous *Common Ragweed*, which has green leaf undersides – mugwort leaf undersides have whitish felt.

Ground Ivy: Leaves, flowers. Spring, summer. Only use in small doses as spice or tea (fresh is best) to get rid of pus, phlegm, cough, runny nose, sinusitis, inflammations of the middle ear, tonsillitis, diarrhoea, skin diseases; Sunny, calming, energising, grounding, detoxifies, diuretic, blood and skin cleansing, anti-inflammatory, heals wounds.

Golden buttons/Tansy: Whole plant above the ground. Spring/ summer/ autumn. Caution, poisonous! Especially during pregnancy! The smell (and smoke if you put it on fire – don't breath that in) repels mosquitoes, flies and mice. Works sometimes, not always.

Hedge Bedstraw, Stickywilly/Catchweed Bedstraw/Cleaver, Lady's Bedstraw: Whole plant above the ground. Spring until autumn. Edible. Fresh sap/juice from Stickywilly can be used as deodorant (just crush between your fingers). Roots of all of these dye textiles red. Put crushed leaves on wounds, makes blood clot; blood and skin cleansing, diuretic.

Horse Chestnuts: Inedible. For washing clothes, hair, body, dishes etc. Take a good handful or two, crush them with a hammer, steep in twice the amount of water with some vinegar, stir or shake. Let sit at least overnight, pour through sieve, use the water. Store in fridge if possible.