FORAGING ST. LOUIS
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Why eat wild plants?

They are free – no labor, no weeding, no watering...

They are nutritious – many wild plants contain more vitamins than domestic veggies

It is fun to collect!

“Edible wild plants are endowed with one or more parts that can be used for food if gathered at the appropriate stage of growth and properly prepared.” (Kallas 2010:35)

Know your plant! Be SURE it is the right one. If you aren’t absolutely, positively, 100% sure it is the right plant, DON’T EAT IT!!! Be aware of look-alikes, and double check identity with more than one source.
Don’t assume all plants from the same family are edible. Don’t assume that all parts of the same plant are edible. For example, elderberry flowers and berries are edible, but the rest of the plant is poisonous.

It’s a bad idea to sample a plant to check for edibility.

Use plants at the right stage of maturity. For example, pokeweed becomes poisonous as it gets older.
Sometimes the best stage of growth for identification is not the same as the best stage for eating. You can always mark a plant in one season and return in another to eat it...

Know how to prepare a plant properly. Some plants must be cooked, or must be boiled in a change of water, or processed in some way. For example, acorns must have tannins leached out of them to be tasty.

Eat in moderation. Sample one thing at a time in small amounts. Individuals have different food sensitivities and it is hard to tell how your body will react to a new food.

Think about where the plant is growing...is there a good chance it has pesticides or toxins from exhaust on it? Watch out for poison ivy.

Ethics and Conservation

Do not collect large amounts of plants not common to the area, and don’t collect threatened and endangered species at all.

Dig roots sparingly unless they reproduce more abundantly when dug. Replant bits of rhizomes and roots.

Respect property rights.

Check regulations on public lands. Most state parks and conservation areas allow collection of nuts, berries, and greens, but only for your own consumption (some won’t let you take them out of the park, but you can eat what you want on the spot).

Try growing your own if they are natives. Many of the edible plants we will talk about will grow (and may already be growing) in disturbed soil like that of lawns and backyard gardens...so you can weed and gather wild edibles at the same time.
FORAGING RESOURCE LIST:

IDENTIFICATION GUIDES:


HOW-TO GUIDES:


RECIPES:


MUSHROOMS:
