My Favorite Edible Wild Herbs

In my back yard in northeast Ohio and in the neighboring woods, from April to October I harvest many edible wild plants that I like to add to my foods. These wild greens add nutrition and flavor to any dish you may be creating. Dandelions are often right outside your kitchen door. The fresh young leaves are some of the first plants to pop out as the weather warms up in the spring. Dandelion leaves stimulate bile production and enhances liver function. They contain Inulin, an enzyme that regulates blood sugar in the body. Also look for new growths of Garlic Mustard with their scallop-edged leaves. They have a mild garlicky flavor when crushed and are a wonderful addition to any salad or stir-fry.

Found in many moist areas, the new shoots of Wild Mint, Catnip and Wild Bergamot can add a wonderfully spicy taste to your salads and stir-fries.
On a warm slope I gingerly gather the tops of the Stinging Nettle which are especially high in Iron, Calcium and Vitamin A. Early settlers dried and ground Nettles and mixed the green powder into their dough to add nutrition to their bread. Steam them to wilt their acidic hairs and they will taste like spinach in any dish.

Wild Carrot leaves look and taste like Parsley. Chickweed is both edible and used in salves and ointments.
And in sunny spots Wild Chives send out fresh new growth rich in vitamins and minerals, wafting a savory oniony aroma. Violet leaves and flowers are high in Vitamin C and are slightly acidic, adding a fresh taste to salads.

And I am quite fond of the unique flavor of Sassafras leaves. They have mucilaginous properties and are used to thicken soups and stews.

When crushed they exude a heady fragrance. They are the dominant herb in the “Filet Gumbo” seasoning often used in Southern cuisine.

Tangy Wood Sorrel and Sheep Sorrel usually hide in the flower beds and have a wonderful sour taste. Blended into a cream sauce they make a superb, lemony accompaniment to fish and seafood dishes.
I inhale the pungent scent of the new, light green, feathery leaves of Yarrow as I bundled them into the mix. Yarrow adds a savory, exotic taste. It contains over one hundred medicinal compounds. Another uniquely-flavored wild edible is the Cow Parsnip, the largest plant in the celery and carrot family. Tender young stems can be chopped into stews or filled with cream cheese for a delicious appetizer.

The Indians used the new growth of the Spruce trees as a spicy seasoning for wild game. Gather this when the tips are just opening. They are very high in Vitamin C. Day Lily flowers can be dipped in batter and fried like squash flowers, or dried and mixed with other wild herbs for a nutty addition to any seasoning blend.
I just love finding a golden field of Wintercress. This plant is in the Mustard family and the flower buds look like miniature broccoli heads. They are bitter and aid in digestion as are all plants in the Cruciferous family. Use both the flowers and the leaves.

**Winter Cress**

After washing, drying and finely mincing the herbs, I use a combination of any of these wild plants in all kinds of dishes: salads, stir-fries, casseroles, soups and stews. What a great way to sneak a whole bunch of vitamins and minerals into your diet! Get those digestive juices flowing!

For some mouthwatering recipes using wild herbs [click here](#).

If you don’t have the time or inclination to harvest the wild herbs yourself, *Ohio Valley Herbal Products* has done it for you.

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