



Fond du Lac Environmental Program

July/August 2008

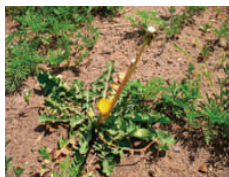
The 'Weeds' in your Yard: Pesky Plants or a Healthy Smorgasbord?

Many people go through great efforts to keep the weeds in their yard at bay. Some people make sure to cut their grass often to keep them from growing, others use more extreme means, such as using herbicides or other plant killers.

What many people do not know, is that several of these 'unwanted' weeds are not only edible, they have great nutritional value and in some cases, healing properties. Plus, the palette of colors can make a yard beautiful! Here are some of the common 'weeds' and their health benefits!

Dandelions:

Dandelions are one of the most complained about weeds in the United States, but are valued throughout the rest of the world as a nutritional food source. Dandelions have perhaps the most extensive list of nutritional and healing properties of most plants.



All parts of the dandelion are edible. The leaves are best collected when the plant is young, especially before it flowers as they are less bitter-tasting. They are great in a mixed green salad! If you collect them later, steam or sauté them to help remove some of the bitterness.

Dandelion greens are the most nutrient-rich of any greens. They are full of potassium and can act as a diuretic. They detoxify the blood (lots of iron!) and are good for liver health. They are also known to treat digestive disorders, arthritis, insomnia, diabetes, hypoglycemia, eczema and are good for the urinary tract, female reproductive system, and fighting viruses. The sap from the stem can help treat

stings, warts, blemishes and corns. See page 2 for some dandelion recipes!

Red Clover:

Red Clover has many of the same benefits as soy, especially for women. It is also used in concoctions meant to purify and refresh the human body. Additionally, red clover is high in calcium and can help treat bronchitis and similar respiratory ailments, skin conditions and many other ailments. The young flower head is most often eaten, though the leaves can also be eaten in salads and soups or cooked like spinach. Dried leaves have a vanilla-like flavor that can be used in cooking. The flowers, dried or fresh, make a great sweet tea.



Plantain:

Plantains (not the banana-shaped ones from tropical areas you find in grocery stores now) are another plant whose young leaves are good in salads. Plantain leaves are rich in vitamin A and calcium. It is also closely related to the plantain species containing psyllium, a common ingredient in laxatives. Soaking a couple seeds in water and drinking will act as a mild laxative. You can also crush the leaves and place on wounds, bites, blisters, burns and other skin ailments.



http://hear.org/saar/hiplants/images/hires/saar_080327_3897_plantain_lanceolata.jpg

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Chickweed:

Chickweed is also great in salads and is full of nutrients. It can also help with indigestion and ulcers. It is more commonly used externally on the skin to treat eczema, rashes and itchy skin. Important to note: if you are allergic to plants in the daisy family, you may be allergic to chickweed.



Nettle:

Though nettles are known for their stinging and irritation, they are actually really good for you! If you collect them using gloves or some other way that will avoid contact with the stingers, you can cook them to get rid of the sting. Nettles are full of calcium and help with allergies. They can even help with regrowing thinning hair! They also help provide relief for those with asthma or other respiratory problems and act as a tonic for you if you have been feeling stressed or fatigued.



Important Precautions:

Be sure when harvesting these 'weeds' or any others, you pick them from an area that is free from animal waste, leaking automobiles, and pesticides/herbicides.

Consult a doctor if you are concerned about allergies to any of these plants and before you use any plants to treat health conditions. It is not recommended that you discontinue your regular medical treatments.

Sources:

<http://www.pfaf.org/database/plants.php?Trifolium+pratense>

Fried Dandelion Flowers

- 1 cup milk
- 1 egg
- 1 cup plain flour
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp pepper
- optional (other favorite seasonings like garlic powder, onion salt, or seasoning salt-go light on the seasonings until you're sure you like the flavors with the blooms)

Gather and wash dandelions. Cut the stems up to the head. You need to leave some of the green to hold the flower head in place. Gently wrap the flowers in a paper towel to remove excess water.

Beat the egg and add the milk. Whisk in the flour and seasonings. You can dip the flowers and fry immediately, but the batter stays on better if it's refrigerated for a half hour or so.

When the batter is lightly browned, lift the flowers out of the oil and drain them on paper towels.

Source: <http://southerncuisine.suite101.com/article.cfm/frieddandelionflowers>

Cream of Dandelion Soup (Recipe from France)

INGREDIENTS

- 2 pounds (about 6 cups) dandelion greens, trimmed and washed
 - 1 tablespoon butter or olive oil
 - 4 cups vegetable stock
 - 2 large leeks, white and light parts only, cleaned and sliced
 - 1 carrot, cleaned and diced
 - 2 1/2 cups milk
 - 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard (optional)
 - Salt and pepper to taste
 - Dandelion buds and/or flower petals for garnish
1. If using more mature or very bitter tasting greens, blanch them in a pot of boiling salted water, then drain and squeeze out the excess water, chop and set aside.
 2. Heat butter or oil in a large pot over medium high heat, add greens, carrot and leeks and cook, stirring often, for 15 minutes.
 3. Add stock and simmer for about 15 minutes. Reduce heat to medium and whisk in milk, cook stirring frequently, until slightly thickened.
 4. Puree mix in a tightly-covered blender until smooth, taking care with the hot liquid. Season with salt and pepper, and add Dijon if you like.
 5. Serve in bowls and garnish with flowers or buds.

Source: <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/cream-of-dandelion-soup-recipe.html>

Dandelion Syrup

- 100 dandelion flowers, or 1 and 1/2 cups petals
 - 1 cup sweetener (see above)
 - 3 cups water
 - Juice of 1/2 lemon (optional)
1. Remove the petals from the sepal (the sepal consists of the small tight leaves that extend from the stem and grasp the flower). This takes a while to get the hang of, but gets much quicker as you go along. Be sure to not allow any green into the petals, it will add bitterness to the syrup.
 2. Place the petals in a medium pot and cover with 3 cups water and bring to a simmer. Turn off the heat, cover and let sit overnight.
 3. Strain dandelion water into a bowl, pressing on the flowers with the back of a spoon to extract all the liquid.
 4. Return water to pot and add sweetener, and lemon juice if using, and simmer over low heat until thickened.
 5. Allow to cool, and pour into a clean jar or bottle. Store covered in refrigerator.

Source: <http://www.care2.com/greenliving/the-green-dish-dandelion-syrup.html>

Got Allergies???

Try this tea...

Combine equal amounts crushed dried peppermint, crushed dried nettles, and crushed green tea leaves in a jar. Shake it up to mix them all. If you tend to get really congested, you can add extra peppermint. put the mixture in tea bags, or use a tea strainer. Drink one cup a day throughout the year to help with allergy relief.

You can either collect the nettles or all three of these can be found in your local natural foods stores and co-ops in the bulk herbs and spices section.



News from the Air Program

The RBC approved \$500 donation to the Virgil Masayesva Native American Environmental Education Scholarship Fund at Northern Arizona University. The principle purpose of the fund is to support qualified Native American students who are pursuing environmental careers, and others who are committed to careers associated with environmental protection of Indian Country.

Virgil Masayesva was a member of the Hopi Tribe and a decorated Vietnam veteran. He was the co-founder of the Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals (ITEP) at NAU, and was actively involved in the development of ITEP's tribal air quality training programs, including the American Indian Air Quality Training Program, the Tribal Air Monitoring Support Center and many other programs dedicated to the protection and preservation of tribal cultures and sovereignty.

ITEP also offers training in Solid Waste Management and Environmental Compliance and Inspection. The request was made by the Environmental Air Program.

The Air Program was awarded an intern, December Dickerson of Bad River, through the Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals (ITEP) and Northern Arizona University for the summer. December has been working on our emissions inventory. She is a UW-Superior student and an Army Reservist.

The Air Program's Diesel Retrofit Grant will be funding the retrofit of 12 pieces of heavy equipment for the Fond du Lac Construction Company.

How Safe is Your Beach?

Ah, summer, the best time to cool off with a nice swim. Big Lake is a great place to swim, whether it's at Basset's Beach on the south end of the lake, or Molested's Beach on the north end of the lake. There are times when swimming is not recommended, however. When it rains, animal and human waste can wash off the beach into the water, and harmful levels of coliform bacteria can build up in the water. Coliform bacteria live in the guts of mammals, and one of the most dangerous kinds of coliform bacteria is *Escherichia coli*, also known as *E. coli*. *E. coli* can make people very sick. When fecal coliform bacteria are found in the water, it's a good indicator that *E. coli* might also be present. The Fond du Lac Environmental Program is working hard to make sure the beaches on Big Lake are safe. Once or twice a week, we take samples from the beaches, bring them back to the lab, and test them for the presence of fecal coliform bacteria. If the bacteria count gets above a pre-determined threshold level, we post a sign at the beach warning people not to come in contact with the water. We posted this warning on July 1st, but removed it the next day when further testing revealed the beach was safe again. The high level of bacteria was probably associated with heavy rains over the weekend and use by large groups of schoolchildren. People can help keep the beach clean by not allowing diaper-aged children in the water without tight-fitting rubber or plastic pants. Also make sure to dispose of diapers and pet waste properly! If you are concerned about beach safety, call Nancy Schuldt at 878-8010. To learn more about beach safety, go to www.mnbeaches.org.

Water Saving tips for your garden and yard...

- 1) Water your garden in the morning, before it gets too hot or in the evening once it cools off. This will help minimize water evaporation and prevent your leaves from drying out.
- 2) When you cut your grass, leave it a little longer. Longer grass holds water in better than short grass.
- 3) Use a rain barrel to collect rainwater.
- 4) Adjust your downspouts and gutters so they flow towards your trees and shrubs.
- 5) Use a soaker hose. They distribute water evenly and directly to the ground, which minimizes water loss due to wind when using a sprinkler.
- 6) Apply mulch to your garden...it holds in moisture AND prevents weeds from growing!



Do your part to conserve natural resources and protect the environment for future generations....Recycle.

Fond du Lac Waste Site: 878-8069

Who's Who?

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