

**FIELD SORREL, SHEEP  
SORREL** (*Rumex  
acetosella*)

FLOWERS: May - September

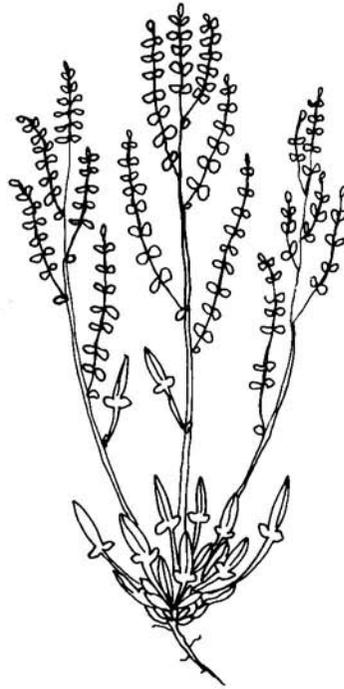
DESCRIPTION: Basal, arrow-  
head leaves, sour taste.

HABITAT: Sour soils of  
fallow fields, waste  
ground, railroads

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: April -  
November

USES: Salad, potherb, soup,  
seasoning



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CAUTION: See page 214

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I love the shape of this arrow-like leaf as well as the sour taste. It, like the wood sorrel, enhances a tossed salad. While this is not a member of the wood sorrel family, like that family it contains potassium oxalate which could be poisonous if eaten in large quantities. The small amounts eaten fresh in salad or as a field nibble are of little concern. It loses its poison potential after being boiled, therefore making it a safe, tasty addition to the greens pot. Another excellent use is to chop it up and add it to cole slaw.

A soup made from field sorrel is great! Cook the sorrel for 30 minutes. Add 4 cups milk, chopped onion, 2 t butter, 2 T flour. I serve this soup with onion breads.

On a recent weekend outing my menu called for bacon-lettuce-tomato sandwiches. I forgot the lettuce. A short hike produced a large supply of field sorrel and the needed lettuce. Anyone for a Bacon-Sorrel-Tomato? You'll try this again, I'm sure.

Old-timers used this plant in a variety of ways. The leaves were used to cleanse the blood, expel worms and warm the heart, while the roots aided menstruation and expelled kidney stones. You've got to admit, that's quite a plant!



## LAMB'S QUARTERS

(*Chenopodium album*)

FLOWERS: May - October

DESCRIPTION: Branching stems, red streaked. Leaves green above, whitish under, toothed. Goosefoot Family.

HABITAT: Waste and cultivated ground, railroads, barnyards

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: April - November

USES: Potherb, vegetable, salad, flour

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Lamb's quarters, or pigweed as it is sometimes called, is another plant I half-heartedly allow to stay in a portion of my flower garden. It is mild as a vegetable and a worthy substitute for lettuce in a tossed salad. The tops are a tender source of edibles from spring until frost kills it in the fall. When lettuce prices soared, lamb's quarters got a workout at our house.

We have a farm, making us dude farmers, that has a garden of sorts planted. We were not able to get the land plowed last fall, so the dirt clods are huge and the area rough. We had cleaned out an old outbuilding and spread all the well-seasoned fertilizer over the garden site. Two weeks of rain and no attention produced the largest supply of lamb's quarters one could ever want! The problem was that we really wanted the tomatoes, corn, cucumbers, squash, watermelons, beans, beets, etc. that were literally lost under the canopy of lamb's quarters!!! What's this about you can't have your cake....?

Like most greens, lamb's quarters shrinks in cooking so you need to gather about three times the amount needed when cooked. It is good alone or goes into the pot with poke and dock. Cook these greens for about an hour in a small amount of water. Season with salt, pepper, butter and vinegar or lemon juice.

I freely substitute lamb's quarters for spinach in any recipe and have good results. Baked lamb's quarters is fixed in the following manner. Pick 6 cups of lamb's quarters. (Hopefully you'll have 2 cups after cooking.) Melt 1 T butter and add 1 T flour,  $\frac{1}{2}$  t salt and a dash of pepper, and add 1 cup hot milk. Cook until the sauce thickens, then add the lamb's quarters. Pour into a greased casserole and sprinkle the top with  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup of grated cheese. Bake 350 degrees for 30 minutes.

104 This green may be wilted for excellent results. Fry a couple of strips of bacon and crumble over a bowl of washed lamb's quarters and a small amount of wild onion. Using the bacon grease, add equal amounts of vinegar and water and 1 T sugar along with 1 t salt. Bring this to a boil and pour over your salad. The hot mixture causes the greens to droop or wilt. This is even better when leaf lettuce and Cossack asparagus slices are added to the lamb's quarters.

I'm particularly fond of the rice casserole listed for purslane on page 60, using lamb's quarters as the spinach substitute. Another delectable use is to include lamb's quarters in your omelet.

An appetizer may be made by cooking a cup of lamb's quarters. The cooked greens will boil down to about one-third cup. Add the third-cup of cooked greens to a 3 oz. package of cream cheese and blend. Spread the mixture on melba toast or crackers. A dab of wild jelly may be added on top for variety.

In the fall the seeds can be gathered by cutting off the seed spikes, pouring back and forth to winnow away the chaff, and getting the seeds for cereal. The seeds can be ground raw, roasted for 2 hours in a 350-degree oven and mashed. This mashed product should later be ground. This is a substitute for wheat flour in pancakes, muffins, and biscuits. It gives a dark coloration to the food and a taste that makes it hardly worth the effort.

However, for the leaves alone, it is a plant well worth getting to know.



## GREEN AMARANTH

(*Amaranthus spinosus*  
*A. hybridus*)

FLOWERS: June - October

DESCRIPTION: Varies, see Steyermark

HABITAT: Waste and cultivated ground, barnyards, pastures, along railroads

LOCATION: Statewide, especially central and southern Missouri

COLLECTION: May - October

USES: Potherb, vegetable, breadstuff

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Green amaranth is also called pigsweed because pigs find it a palatable meal. Another name is wild beet. This helps in identifying the plant because the roots are bright red.

I'm partial to this spinach substitute because of its mild taste. It's also a good green to add to the greens pot to tone down stronger tastes.

We have horses and with horses go the barnlot weeds, which is where I find green amaranth growing rampant. They are another unlikely choice for food, with green flowerspikes and a thorny appearance. Nonetheless, when they are 6" to 8" tall they make a very passable spinach substitute. I've fixed this plant in an egg-cheese casserole for a wild food dinner party. The comments were very favorable. To fix Green Amaranth Casserole, cook enough greens to yield two cups of cooked greens. Place a layer of amaranth in a greased casserole, a layer of sliced hard-boiled eggs, another layer of amaranth and cover with a cheese sauce of 2 cups

milk, 6 T oleo melted and blended with 6 T flour, salt and pepper to taste, and 1 cup cheddar cheese. Bake at 350 degrees for half an hour.

I've also fixed this plant as a rice-spinach casserole. Tossed in oil and sprinkled with vinegar, amaranth makes a very passable dish, and it can also be eaten raw in salad. Every way has proven to be an agreeable dinner dish. You gotta admit — it's not the run-of-the-mill dinner vegetable, and variety is added to your vegetable list!

106 In the fall the flower spikes produce an abundance of small, shiny black seeds which provide a flour substitute when ground and mixed with either white or wheat flour. The taste leaves something to be desired. Euell Gibbons felt the flavor was improved by roasting the seeds prior to grinding them. Seeds roasted 1-1½ hours in a 350-degree oven, stirred occasionally, seem to lose some of the disagreeable flavor.





**WILD GRAPES** (*Vitis*  
species)

FLOWERS: May - July

DESCRIPTION: Large, heart-shaped leaves, toothed. Climbing tendrils, small green flowers hang on the cluster stem.

HABITAT: Woods, thickets, stream banks, fence-rows

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: September - November

USES: Jelly, pies, salads, wine, juice, wrap for small game birds

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**CAUTION:** Moonseed is a poisonous look-alike. The berries of moonseed have a moon-shaped seed inside while wild grapes have the tear-drop seed. The vine of wild grape is woody with bark that shreds. Moonseed vines are neither woody nor easily shredded. The leaf of moonseed is generally smooth and lobed but not toothed as are the grape's. See page 218.

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There are eight or more varieties of wild grapes in Missouri, some larger, some sweeter, yet all that I've tried make a decent jelly.

There is one tidbit of information worth knowing before picking wild grapes. A similar plant, bearing fruits much like the grape, is the poisonous moonseed, so named because of a crescent-shaped moon seed inside. Look up this plant, then proceed.

Early in the spring and summer, the tender wild grape leaves are a nice addition to a tossed salad. They are somewhat hard to chew, but so is fresh spinach in a salad!

Grape leaves impart a great flavor in a dill crock, when a few are added between layers of wild picklings. In fact, the young tendrils are acceptable in a pickling solution for later use as a nibble or to be used in slaw.

As a main dish, try stuffed grape leaves. I make a rice-venison (or -hamburger), onion, tomato mixture. Place a large spoonful on the leaf, roll it toward the leaf point, tucking in the ends as you go, and steam in a covered dish for an hour. I find the leaf is generally not eaten in full, but the rice stuffing is moist and delicious.

Grape leaves do good things for dove. Wrap each dove, after marinating it, in two grape leaves and put all of them in a covered casserole. Euell Gibbons uses a sauce of  $\frac{1}{2}$  stick butter, 1 T flour, salt and pepper. This adds the proper final touches. Quail or any game may be fixed this way also. I so love broiled quail with a strip of bacon wrapped around it that I have only used the grape leaves once. However, others prefer quail in a stuffing or steamed, so try it.

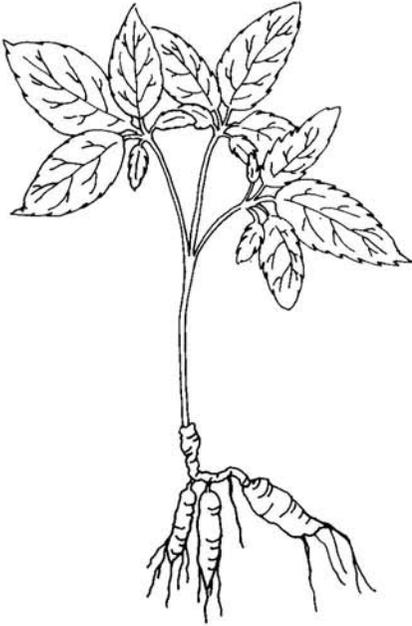
108 To preserve the leaves for winter use, sprinkle salt on each leaf, stacking one on top of the other. I put these in a piece of Tupperware and seal. Before using, wash the salt off thoroughly.

The grapes are great for jelly. To make grape jelly, cover the grapes with water and cook 10 minutes or so. Pour off the liquid and add 1 cup of sugar per cup of juice and a box of Sure-Jell per four cups of liquid. Cook the mixture until the jelly drops together at the end and slithers off your spoon. Set off the stove, skim off the white foam topping, and pour into jars. Grape juice is another good way to save the grapes. Wash, stem, and mash grapes in a kettle. Barely cover them with water and simmer 30 minutes. Strain, add sugar to taste (approximately 1 or  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups per quart). Simmer again for 15 minutes and pour into sterilized jars and seal. If canned unsweetened, the juice may be used in making jelly during the winter.

A yummy sherbet can be made from this juice in an ice tray. Combine 2 cups juice, 3 cups half and half,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup crushed pineapple, 1 T lemon juice and 1 cup sugar. Freeze until firm, then beat with a mixer and return to the freezer.

A wine connoisseur would not let the thought of using the fruits of the wild grape for this cause go by unmentioned. For those individuals, here is a simple wine recipe. Place 2 cups washed, stemmed grapes in a crock, add 1 cup sugar and continue this layering process until you run out of grapes or crock. Cover and allow the crock to set in a cool, dark basement for a couple of months. Carefully put the liquid into bottles and cap.

A grape pie is yours by running the cooked berries through the colander to get 2 cups pulp. Add 1 cup sugar, 3 T flour, 1 t lemon juice, 1 T butter, salt. Put in a pie crust and bake at 425 degrees for an hour.



**GINSENG:** (*Panax quinquefolius*)

**FLOWERS:** June - July

**DESCRIPTION:** Three compound leaves; 5 leaflets per leaf, all attached at the same point on the leaf stalk. The flower is one simple umbel.

**HABITAT:** North-facing rich, wooded slopes, steep limestone bluffs and outcrops

**LOCATION:** Throughout the Ozarks and in eastern Missouri

**COLLECTION:** Leaves, May - June; Roots, October - March

**USES:** Tea, emergency food

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Ginseng, according to the Chinese, is an aphrodisiac, heart stimulant and cure-all for most diseases. Perhaps the enticement of an aphrodisiac, maybe the market value of the roots, but regardless of the reason, ginseng's existence has been threatened in many parts of Missouri. The roots are the part of the plant most sought. These long, fleshy roots are aromatic and parsnip-like, found deep under the low-growing plant. The roots are shaped much like a man which gives the plant its name. In Chinese, *Ginseng* means "likeness of a man," and roots most shaped like a man are considered priceless.

The roots may be used as an emergency food by boiling and seasoning with salt, pepper and butter. The young leaves of ginseng, either fresh or dried, may be used for a tea.

**BUCK BRUSH, INDIAN  
CURRANT, CORAL-  
BERRY** (*Symphoricarpos  
orbiculatus*)

FLOWERS: July - August

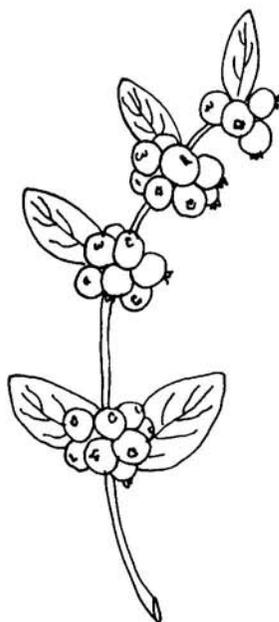
DESCRIPTION: Small woody  
plant; simple leaves,  
opposite. Arching  
branches. Flowers and  
fruits in leaf axils.  
Honeysuckle Family.

HABITAT: Pastures, dry or  
rocky woodland, old  
fields, thickets,  
railroads

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: Fall and  
winter

USES: Survival



110

I collected some of the red berries of the buck brush or Indian currants. They are very distasteful, although I was not ill nor did I show any signs of ill effects from eating them. I dried a cup of these berries by placing them on a screen in my attic and forgetting them for a few months. My collecting had been spurred on by *The Good Earth Almanac* which reported that the berries of this plant were used by Indians as a pemmican, or dried jerky-like food source. This has apparently been used with venison and other dried fruits pounded into a flat, thin layer and dried. I pounded the cupful of fresh berries into a thin leather to dry, and later pounded the dried berries into the thin strips, but found the taste was such that I would use it strictly as a survival need!!!

Steyermark mentions that the birds do not eat the fruits. Another source indicated that they did. Following Steyermark's advice, fellows, will make you a wise bird!!