

blue-flowering edibles

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SPIDERWORT (*Tradescantia virginiana*, *T. ohiensis*, *T. bracteata*)

FLOWERS: April - June

DESCRIPTION: Parallel veined, long leaves. Thick stem producing purple flowers at stem tips. Spiderwort Family.

HABITAT: Open wood slopes, valleys

LOCATION: *T. virginiana*... eastern Missouri;
T. ohiensis...statewide;
T. bracteata...scattered in southern Missouri

COLLECTION: March - June

USES: Salad, potherb

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This beautiful, deep purple wildflower is a tasty addition to a wild salad. The leaves and stems may both be cut up and used.

It also is a good potherb fixed alone or with other greens. This does not need to be cooked long, just boiled in salted water for a few minutes and coated with butter.

DAYFLOWER (*Commelina communis*,
C. caroliniana,
C. diffusa,
C. erecta)

FLOWERS: May - October

DESCRIPTION: Flower has 2 blue upper petals larger than the white lower petal. Leaves are wide, but parallel-veined. Plant reclines somewhat. Spiderwort Family.

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HABITAT: Cultivated and waste ground, moist soil, low woods, thickets

LOCATION: *C. communis*... lightly scattered state-wide; *C. caroliniana*... Jackson County only (Steiermark); *C. diffusa*... southern and central Missouri; *C. erecta*... southern and central Missouri

COLLECTION: May - October

USES: Potherb



The dayflower is a reputedly questionable edible. While most edible sources do not even list it, Fernald and Kinsey suggest that the group is not considered poisonous and experiments are in order.

My experiments indicated the potherb to be mild, rather bland, and therefore certainly not disagreeable.

I boiled dayflowers in salt water for a short period and seasoned in the following ways: 1) added bacon drippings; 2) doused in butter; 3) mixed with vinegar.

All three ways were appealing. More experiments are in order. The fleshy roots of *C. erecta* varieties can also be cooked as a vegetable.

VIOLETS (*Viola* species)

FLOWERS: March - June

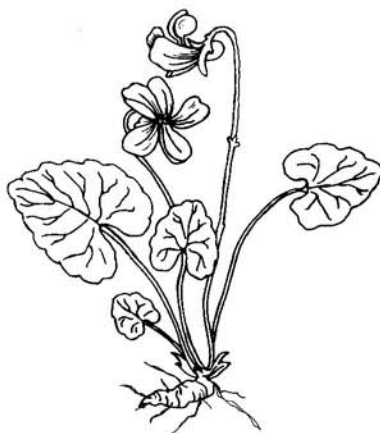
DESCRIPTION: Flowers are irregular, 2 large petals above with 3 smaller ones below. Leaves vary with species. Violet Family.

HABITAT: Widely varied

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: March - June

USES: Salad, confection, soup, jelly



This pretty, blue spring flower has several wild edible uses. The leaves and petals may be added to a salad and eaten raw. The leaves are very mucilaginous and therefore a good thickener in soup. It may be used in a vegetable soup as you would okra. Because of this thickening ability, it is often called wild okra.

For a wild sweet tooth, the petals may be dipped in stiff egg whites, rolled in sugar and allowed to dry. Another use for the flowers is in making jelly. Place the flowers in a jar, packing rather firmly. Pour boiling water over the flowers in the jar, cap and allow this to stand for 24 hours. Pour off the liquid and proceed as with regular jelly. Measure the liquid poured off the petals. Put the liquid in a large saucepan and add a package of Sure-Jell per four cups. When the mixture comes almost to a boil, add a cup of sugar for every cup of liquid measured earlier. Cook until the jelly slithers off the spoon.

It's an interesting side-dish for a dinner party. After all, how many times have you been served violet jelly?

SELF-HEAL (*Prunella vulgaris*)

FLOWERS: May - September

DESCRIPTION: Square stem,
tight flowering head.
Opposite leaves, often
with a purple cast on
bottom.

HABITAT: Low woodlands,
borders, banks and
gravel bars of streams,
ponds, ditches, pas-
tures, prairies, fields,
railroads

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LOCATION: Statewide

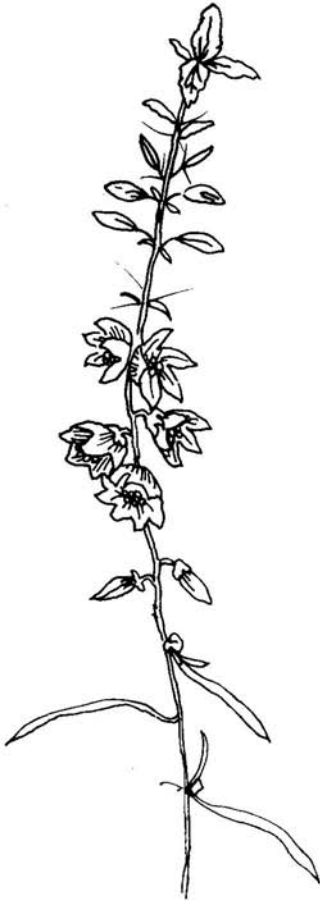
COLLECTION: May -
September

USES: Tea



The common names of self-heal and heal-all were used because some Indians believed it to heal or cure most illnesses. Self-heal must be found the world over, because an old Italian proverb says: "He that hath self-heal and sanicle [black snakeroot] needs no other physician."

A tea is made by soaking the broken leaves in cold water. The leaves may also be dried, powdered and soaked in cold water. This is a bit unusual in that most herb teas are to be drunk warm or hot for the greatest benefit.



BELLFLOWER (*Campanula*
species)

FLOWERS: May - October

DESCRIPTION: Tall, upright
plant. Leaves alternate,
toothed, smaller toward
top of stem. Bell-
shaped, purple flowers
blooming up the stalk.
Bellflower Family.

HABITAT: Rich, moist
woodland, woods
borders, thickets

LOCATION: Statewide

COLLECTION: May - June

USES: Salad, vegetable

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The tall bellflower is eaten as a green or vegetable while young. The creeping bellflower puts on an edible root in September. These branches from the rootstalk are edible raw in a salad. When cooked they are said to be not unlike parsnips.

BURDOCK (*Arctium minus*)

FLOWERS: July - October

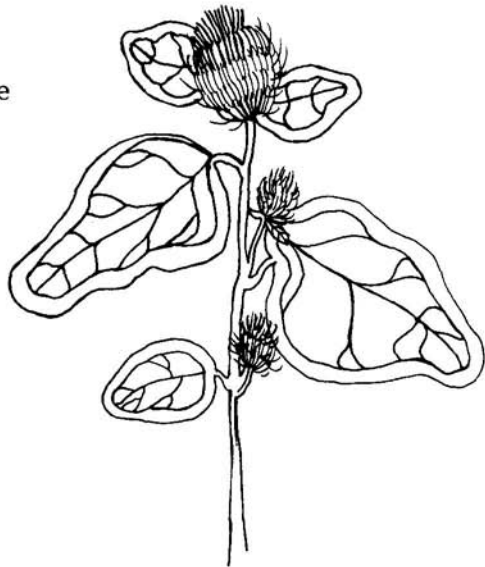
DESCRIPTION: Large elephant-ear leaves, rough and purplish on long stems. Flowers are thistle-like and form burs.

HABITAT: Waste ground, barnyards and dwellings, woodland, thickets, railroads

152 LOCATION: Scattered

COLLECTION: May - June

USES: Salad, cooked vegetable, potherb, soup, confection, pie, coffee substitute



CAUTION: See page 228

There are some interesting tales associated with burdock and its powers of strength and endurance. Personally, I believe those powers are already given to any forager willing to scout, pull, dig and clip this plant for eating.

Burdock is a biennial plant. The first year it forms large elephant-ear leaves on long green stems with purple on the upper portion which resembles wild rhubarb. The second year it sends up a bloom stalk with purple flowers. These flowers form burs that stick to clothing in the fall.

The first-year plants provide an edible root, much acclaimed by the Japanese, and the leaf stalks are used as a rhubarb. If you fancy rhubarb pie, try burdock "Wild Rhubarb" Pie. Cut 3 cups of the first-year burdock petioles into 1" pieces. Place in a pie crust

and cover with 1 cup sugar, 3 T flour, ½ t grated orange peel, a dash of salt and a lump of oleo. Cover with a top crust and bake at 400 degrees for 45 minutes or until brown. It is stringy in texture.

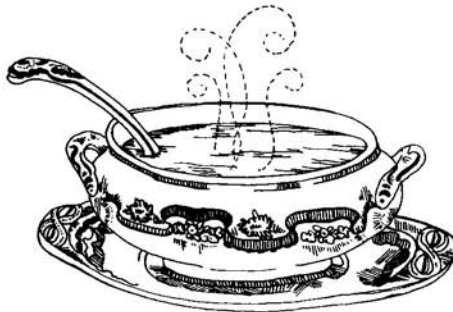
I made a burdock dessert dumpling that used red hots, but I was not very pleased with the results. The pith may be eaten raw in a salad, or candied. Burdock Candy is made by boiling the burdock stems in ¼ t soda and then again in plain water for 15-20 minutes each time. Cut the stems into 1" chunks. Add as much sugar as you have burdock stems, enough water to dissolve the sugar and the juice of either an orange or a lemon. Cook the stems in this syrup until the syrup nearly evaporates. Drain and roll in sugar. This reminds me ever so slightly of candied orange peel or lemon peel. While I prefer the lemon flavoring, it is not something I'd go out of my way to fix. However, I think it might be neat to do out-of-doors on a campout sometime.

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The second-year plant has the edible bloom stalk and the young tops may be used as a potherb. In my first attempts to cook this vegetable, I found the stems fibrous. They do improve if cooked in two waters, the first with a pinch of soda which helps to soften them. Also, the stalks must be gathered early enough in the growth process. They taste a bit like parsnips. Boil for 20 minutes with ¼ t soda, then cook in plain water.

The bloom stalk may be fried, boiled or baked in or out of meat as well as made into candy as the leaf stalk was used.

Ready, Set, now Go eat up those pesky weeds!!



CHICORY (*Cichorium
intybus*)

FLOWERS: May - October

DESCRIPTION: Basal,
dandelion-like leaves.
Blue flowers directly
attached to stem. Rays
of flowers are blunt and
fringed or notched.
Composite Family.

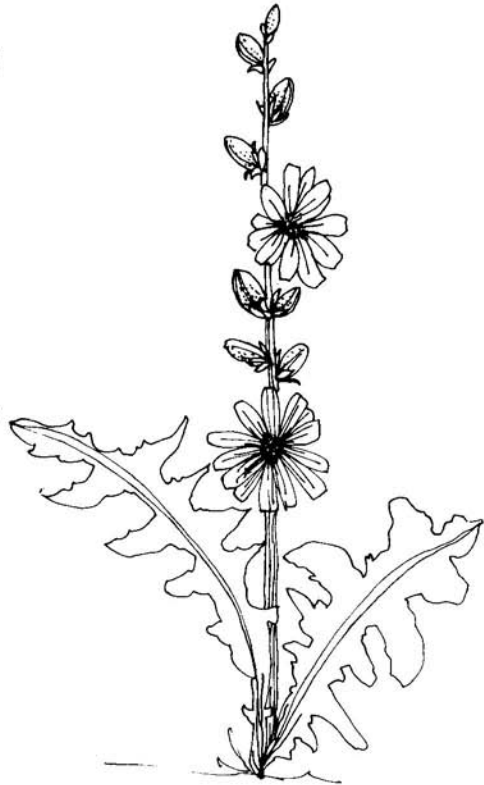
HABITAT: Fields, pastures,
waste ground, road-
sides, railroads

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LOCATION: Statewide
except in southeastern
and midwestern
counties

COLLECTION: March - April,
leaves, root-vegetable;
June - August, root for
coffee

USES: Salad, potherb,
vegetable, jelly, coffee



The sources I've read indicate that chicory has powers powerful enough to make a lover faithful, keep coffee from affecting the heart, make an accurate timetelling clock and a meal fit for a king.

In days gone by, when witchcraft and love potions were fashionable, a chicory drink was reportedly served to one's lover and the powers therein kept the lover true.

The chicory flower was served as a sweetmeat during the reign of King Charles II of England, and the flowers in Sweden open at 5:00 a.m. and close up at 10:00 a.m., telling time of sorts.

