Edible Weeds

Have you ever wished there was some way to use all the weeds growing in your lawn? How about eating them? On page three I have included two recipes for edible weeds. At a recent St Johns County Advanced Master Gardener workshop, we were treated to several snacks using weeds that can be found in most yards. The snacks were very popular, and it led me to do more research on edible weeds. I discovered there are many weeds that are edible, but you need to use caution. Some weeds are poisonous, so proper identification is essential.

- Never ingest a weed without being certain it is edible! Books and the web can help you with identification of edible weeds, but better yet, take the weeds to your local extension office for identification.
- Just because a plant is an edible weed doesn’t mean all parts of it are edible. In some cases, just the root, or just the leaf should be eaten.
- Some edible weeds must be cooked first—don’t eat them raw!

And that’s not all. Consider this: edible weeds are only as safe as their growing conditions. For instance, avoid harvesting weeds in an area that has been subject to past or present herbicide use, road salt and pet waste. Keeping these cautions in mind, try the recipes—you may be surprised!

By Master Gardener Laurie Compton (excerpts from About.com)

American beautyberry (Callicarpa americana) is a Florida native and an outstanding deciduous shrub that grows from 6-8 ft. tall with a loose, open form and outward pointing branches. In springtime, tiny lilac flowers appear, held in clusters called cymes that arise from the leaf axils. By autumn the flowers give rise to berrylke 1/4 inch drupes in striking metallic shades of magenta and violet. The beautyberries are packed tightly together in clusters that encircle the stem. Beautyberries are very adaptable, even to low fertility soils, and are drought tolerant, preferring well drained soils. Propagate by seed and semi-hardwood cuttings. Use beautyberry for massing or individually in woodland plantings. Great for low maintenance natural gardens where it contributes year round beauty and food for wildlife. Use it in semi-shade under tall pines or in full sun where foliage will take on a yellow-green color that combines interestingly with the brilliant violet fruits. The colorful berries last long into winter and are eaten by a variety of birds.

Source: Floridata
The Cutting Edge

September and October in the Garden: What to Plant

**Bedding Plants:** If summer beds need refreshing, try ageratum, celosia, zinnias, and wax begonias for color into fall. In October begin planting for the cooler months ahead. Foxglove, petunias and Shasta daisies are good choices for a fall garden.

**Bulbs:** Add color, texture, and pattern to the garden with the many varieties of elephant ears (Alocasia) available now. Plant agapanthus and Zephyranthes in October for spring blooms.

**Herbs:** Plant herbs that tolerate the warm temperatures of early fall, such as Mexican tarragon, mints, rosemary, and basil. In October try seeding dill, fennel, oregano and sage.

**Vegetables:** Start the fall planting season now. Plant cool season vegetable crops such as beets, cabbage, lettuce, and onions. In October add carrots and Brussels sprouts.

*Source: UF/IFAS Gardening Calendar for North Florida*

September and October in the Garden: What to Do

**Lawn:** In September, continue to monitor the lawn for signs of insect damage. Bahia, Bermudagrass, Zoysia, and St. Augustine lawns should be fertilized this month with a complete fertilizer. Choose one with slow or timed-release nitrogen for longer lasting results. Fall armyworms, chinch bugs, mole crickets, and sod webworms are still active this month. The time to control winter weeds in lawns is before they appear. Pre-emergent herbicides must be applied at the right time to be effective.

**Divide perennials and bulbs:** Divide and replant perennials and bulbs that have grown too large or need rejuvenation. Add organic matter to new planting areas and monitor water needs during establishment. Dig and reset Amaryllis plants now. Caladiums will start to decline in October. Dig the bulbs before the leaves disappear. Clean and store in dry peat moss or sand in a well-ventilated area with a minimum temperature of 70 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Check irrigation system:** Before summer rains taper off, check that irrigation systems are providing good coverage and operating properly.

**Strawberries:** Prepare beds and set strawberry plants in October. If there isn’t room for a bed, try planting them in large containers. Either way provide daily watering until plants are established.

*Source: UF/IFAS Gardening Calendar for North Florida*

Wildlife Calendar for September and October

- Get feeders ready for returning birds.
- Hawk migration begins at St. Joseph Peninsula in Gulf County.
- Bald eagles return to nest sites and begin courtship.
- Look for migrating Peregrine falcons in natural areas, especially along the coast as they follow shorebird prey.
- Start looking for manatees concentrated in rivers, bays, and near power plants.
- Deer breeding begins in south Florida flatwoods.
- Start listening for Spadefoot toads after heavy rains.
- Atlantic sturgeon begin fall migration from the Suwannee and Apalachicola Rivers to the Gulf of Mexico.
- Redfish and trout move up creeks and rivers in north Florida.
- Black bears begin feeding heavily in preparation for winter.
Dollar Weed: This lawn weed is an ideal substitute for curly parsley in your favorite recipes. It is quite nutritious, containing magnesium, potassium, phosphorous, iron, copper, sulfur and vitamins A, B1 and C. When harvesting dollar weed, select the young, tender leaves and avoid the tougher, mature leaves. You can also use the dollar weed flower in salads, or as a garnish.

Sow Thistle: An annual plant with a variety of different leaf margins. Some may be smooth, while others are spiny. In all forms, the leaves will clasp the stem at it’s base. It’s flowers are yellow and resemble a dandelion in form, only smaller. Use sow thistle as a potherb added to soup and stews. Varieties with smooth leaf margins can be added to salads. Cleaned stems can be sliced and used the same as the leaves. Spiny varieties will need to have the prickles cut off before consuming them.

Spanish needle: This is a very unpopular plant, because its seeds cling to clothing. It is a good butterfly plant for its white ray flowers with yellow centers are a favorites with Sul-furs and skippers. The young foliage is a good green to add to cooked dishes. The flowers are edible and can be used in salads or as a garnish. The blooms can be used in tea, jelly or wine making.

### Pats Version of Weed Balls

4-6 slices whole wheat or white bread or 1 package Stove Top Stuffing (2 cups)
1 1/2 cups washed, chopped Spanish needle 1/4 cup melted butter
1/2 cup chopped onion 3 eggs, beaten
3/4 cup shredded cheddar cheese
Seasoning: salt, pepper, sage, oregano, basil, parsley, or use Stove Top season packet
Mix all ingredients. Using an ice cream scoop, place balls on a greased cookie sheet. Bake 20 minutes at 325 degrees

### Dollar Weed Dip

6 to 8 oz. each cream cheese & sour cream 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon lemon pepper 1 teaspoon dill weed
1/3 –1/2 cup finely minced dollar weed
Combine all ingredients. Refrigerate 24 hours. Serves about 10

### Carrot Salad

2 cups shredded carrots 1/2 cup walnuts
1/2 cup mayo 1 cup washed, sliced thistle stems
1 cup cubed apples 1/2 cup crushed pineapple
Combine all ingredients and chill. Serves about 5
Tea anyone? If you’ve been composting all summer, by now you have rich, dark brown, crumbly stuff ready for your fall garden. Spread a 1” to 3” layer over the rows and dig it into the top 4” to 6” of soil. If you plant raised beds, your home-grown compost is just the thing to amend the planting medium. When your houseplants need extra dirt, use compost. If you start plants from seeds, make your own planting mix using fine compost blended with vermiculite or builder’s sand. And don’t forget the tea. Put a few scoops into a large container of collected rainwater and, after an hour or so, use this liquid to water your seedlings, transplants, houseplants, and your raised beds when they get dry. Used as either a foliar spray or a soil drench, compost tea works as a fertilizer and helps prevent disease. Use any uncomposted material as a starter for your next pile. Start heaping up your garden waste, weeds (not the seeds), and kitchen scraps. You can also add some shredded newspaper and, as you rake your lawn this winter, pile on the leaves.

by Master Gardener Pat Caren

Bradford County’s New Garden Club!

That’s right! Bradford County has a brand new garden club! After several membership drives drives the Alligator Creek Garden Club had it’s first full meeting with new president and Master Gardener Pat Caren presiding. The new Alligator Creek Garden Club is a collection of like-minded gardeners, who enjoy ornamental and vegetable gardening and are excited about becoming active in Bradford County. The group is currently meeting on the third Thursdays of each month at 7:00 PM at the Bradford County Extension located at 2266 N. Temple Ave., Starke. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 17th. Please call the Bradford County Extension Service at 904.966.6299 if you are interested in joining.

Upcoming Workshops and Events

**Bradford County Master Gardener Plant Clinic**

Where: Starke Walmart, in the Garden Shop  
When: October 17th, 2009 from 10:00am to 12:00pm

Learn how to grow vegetables hydroponically and get a free lettuce plant as a starter!  
Ornamental and vegetable container gardening demonstrations!  
Bring your garden questions and problems for our Master Gardeners to answer!

**Bradford County Master Gardener Plant Clinic and Bake Sale**

Where: Starke Ace Hardware  
When: October 31, 2009 from 10:00am to 12:00 pm

Learn how to grow vegetables hydroponically and get a free lettuce plant as a starter!  
Ornamental and vegetable container gardening demonstrations!  
Bring your garden questions and problems for our Master Gardeners to answer!  
Baked goods sale!

All proceeds from the bake sale will go to Bradford County Master Gardener Program.