

20 Wild Edibles To Preserve For Winter

Even though you may have worked to grow crops or hunt for food, shortages can still occur. Fortunately, there are plenty of wild plants that are edible and capable of delivering an enormous harvest during the fall season. Here are 20 plants that should be part of your fall foraging and winter plans.

If you cannot find these in your local area, there are many others that may be suitable for you and your family to consume. Learning how to use and store these plants now can truly make living off the grid after a crisis much easier to manage.

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| Plant Name | How to Use It | Best Ways to Preserve |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Milkweed | Boil and then discard water for food consumption. Immature seed pods and flowers are edible. | Must be eaten after being harvested. Seed pods should only be used if the silk inside is white. |
| Wild Onion | Bulbs and leaves/stem can be used as food and also for medicinal purposes. Wild onion can be used to lower blood pressure, heal wounds (when applied directly to skin) and help fight colds. | Store bulbs in a cool, dry place. Onions can also be pressed for oil extracts and elixirs. |
| Blue Berries | Berries are edible | Can be made into jelly, jam, preserves, and wine. |
| Grapes | Edible fruit and leaves, plus grape seed can be used for reducing swelling | Grapes can be dried or made into wine, jelly, and other preserves. Seeds can be pressed to make oil. Leaves should be eaten fresh. |
| Cranberries | Berries are edible. | Same as blueberries. |
| Cattail | Roots are edible | Peel roots and let them dry. Pound with water to get at starch. Allow this mixture to dry and store in an airtight container. Best when consumed fresh. Cattail roots can also be peeled, roasted and consumed without converting into powder. Cattail root should not be consumed raw. |
| Wild Ginger | Herb root used for seasoning and medicinal needs. Can be used for chest congestion and getting rid of colds. | Dry for use as spice and in tea. Can also be made into oils by pressing root. |
| Wild Spearmint/Peppermint | Edible leaves can be used as garnishes or to make tea. Mint can also be used in oils for treating headaches, acid stomach, and as a rub for chest congestion. | Plants in the mint family can be dried, made into wines, or pressed for oil |
| Bull Thistle | Stalks, leaves, and roots are edible. | Remove spines from leaves and stalks. Can be consumed raw, steamed, or boiled. Best when consumed fresh. |
| Apples | Edible fruit | Preserve by storing apples in a cool, dry place. You can also make apple sauce, apple butter, cider, and apple juice. Leave apple juice or cider on a sunny window to make apple jack. |
| Black Walnuts | Nuts are edible, and can also be used for garment dyes | Preserve by storing unshelled nuts in a cool, dry place. Nuts can also be removed from shells, dry/salt roasted and stored in an airtight container. Walnuts can also be shelled, mashed up, boiled, and made into a nut paste when combined with oil. |
| Wild pecans | Nuts are edible | Same as black walnuts. |
| Acorns | Nuts are edible (must be ripe and brown) | Start by boiling shelled acorns to leach out bitterness. Continue leaching until water no longer turns brown. Dry or roast, and then store in an airtight container. Acorns can be ground up to make coffee, nut paste, and other edibles. |
| Maple Syrup | Sap from maple tree | After gathering sap, boil it down until it forms a thick liquid. Store maple syrup in air tight jugs and in a cool, dry place. |
| Hazelnuts | Nuts are edible | Store in shells in a cool dry place; or grind up and boil, then add oil to make paste. Hazelnuts can also be dried or roasted with salt then stored in an airtight container. |
| Peanuts | Nut roots are edible | Same as hazelnuts. Peanuts can also be roasted with honey for added sweetness. |
| Soybean or Endamame | Seeds are edible | Remove from pods and roast. Store in an airtight container. Soybeans can also be fermented and made into soy sauce. Soybeans are best consumed fresh; and can be used raw at that point. They can also be pressed to make oil. |
| Wild Corn/Maize | Seeds are edible | Corn can be frozen for long term storage, or kept in a cool dry place if husks are not removed. Corn and maize can also be ground up into flour and kept in an air tight container. |
| Plantain | Leaves and seeds are edible. You can also use mashed leaves for insect bites and small wounds | Can be cooked or consumed raw. Best when eaten fresh. |
| Prickly Pear | Fruit and leaves are edible | Remove needles by burning them off. Can be consumed cooked. Best when eaten fresh. |

How to Find Other Edible Plants

Even though you may think you can recognize certain plants in the wild, poisonous ones can easily fool you in a crisis situation. This is especially important to consider if you are passing through a geographic region that features plants you may not be accustomed to. Before cooking or eating any plant, it is best to use the Universal Edibility Test first.

Aside from helping you determine which plants are poisonous to humans, this test will also help you avoid consuming plants that you may be allergic to. Needless to say, even if a plant appears safe for you to consume, everyone in the group should do the same test after you in order to make sure they are not allergic to the plant in question.

No matter how traumatic a crisis situation may be, finding food is always going to be important. Regardless of where you happen to be, wild plants can be harvested during the fall season. While some may be easier to store than others, rest assured that they can easily help you live comfortably and well until other food sources can be grown or hunted.

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