

# Dandelion

Latin name: *Taraxacum officinale*

Dandelions are a rich source of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. One cup of raw dandelion greens contains 112% of your daily required intake of vitamin A and 535% of vitamin K. The dandelion has a long list of powerful healing abilities.

How to ID: Dandelions bloom yellow in the spring and throughout the year. They have toothy, deeply-notched leaves that are hairless. They grow from a central rosette above the taproot.

Where to find: Dandelions are the most common broadleaf weed in most lawns. It is found in virtually every kind of habitat, from openings in deep woods to cultivated fields, from rocky hillsides to fertile gardens.

Edible parts: Leaves, roots, and flowers. Dandelion leaves and flowers can be added to a salad or cooked into most any recipe. They can also be dried and stored for the winter or blanched and frozen. The root can be made into a coffee substitute. The flowers, root and leaves can be dried, stored and made into tea.

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# Wild Violet

Latin name: *Viola papilionacea*

Wild violets are a spring-time food. As temperatures warm up the flowers wilt and die off by the heat of the summer. The plant has high levels of vitamins A and C, and has several medicinal properties, as well.

How to ID: This is a low-growing plant which features heart-shaped leaves and large blue-violet flowers (sometimes yellow or white). Each flower appears on its own leafless stalk. The flower has an inner white area and is somewhat hairy. Each flower slightly droops. The leaf margin is serrated (toothed) and they do not have any hairs.

Where to ID: A native wildflower, violets tend to start growing in shady areas and spread to sunnier locations should the conditions be favorable. They can take over a lawn. They tend to prefer part shade.

Edible parts: Violet flowers and leaves are edible. They can be used in salads or cooked as greens. The flowers can be made into jellies, candied, or tossed into a salad.

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# Garlic Mustard

Latin name: *Alliaria petiolata*

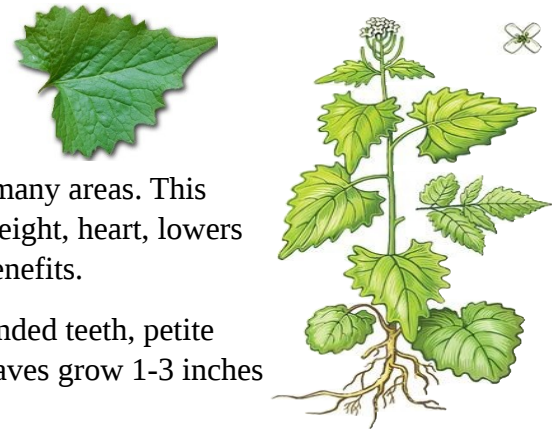
Garlic Mustard is an herb that has been labeled an invasive weed in many areas. This nutritious plant only flowers from May to June. It is good for your weight, heart, lowers cholesterol, may help prevent cancer, as well as many other health benefits.

How to ID: Broad heart-shaped or kidney-shaped leaves, coarse, rounded teeth, petite flowers, onion or garlic odor, slender pods that contain the seeds. Leaves grow 1-3 inches in diameter and may be hairless or hairy to varying degrees.

Where to find: Grows along fence lines, wooded areas, swamps, ditches, roadsides, railway embankments and takes advantage of disturbed areas. This plant is often found in open disturbed forests.

Edible parts: Flowers, leaves, roots and seeds. Leaves in any season can be eaten but once the weather gets hot, the leaves will taste bitter. Flowers can be chopped and tossed into salads. The roots can be collected in early spring and again in late fall, when no flower stalks are present. Garlic mustard roots taste very spicy, somewhat like horseradish. In the fall the seed can be collected and eaten.

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# Hostas

Latin name: All hostas are edible, but *Hosta montana* and *Hosta sieboldii* are most popularly used for vegetables. *Hosta plantaginea* is grown for its sweet flowers.

A common ornamental plant, the young shoots of hostas coming up in the spring are delicious! Commonly eaten in Japan, “urui” is the word used to name these.

Where to find: Hostas are a common plant found in yard landscaping, as well as wild in the woods.

Edible parts: In the same plant family as asparagus, the shoots, leaf petiole, whole leaves and flowers are edible raw. The fresh leaves and stems are best harvested while young and tender. The older leaves become tough and fibrous and may become bitter. Hostas can be used as a cut and come again plant and will readily re-grow their leaves after being chopped down to the base. Leaves can be sautéed, added to stir fry, or used in sandwich wraps. Just treat them like any other leafy green, or as an asparagus substitute. The flowers can be used to beautify your salad or featured as a cake decoration.

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# Japanese Knotweed

Latin name: *Fallopia japonica* or *Polygonum cuspidatum*

Japanese knotweed is in the Buckwheat family, and is generally not liked because it can grow up to 3 feet per month, its roots travel over 10 feet deep, and they spread up to 20 feet in every direction. It is a great source of vitamins A and C, and provides many vital minerals, iodine, and resveratrol. So, let's eat this invasive plant!

How to ID: In the early spring, Japanese knotweed looks like nondescript fat, green, red-flecked stalks poking up from the ground. Although the young leaves are hard to identify, the big clue are the dead stalks from the year before. They resemble bamboo, are hollow, lightweight and have wooden-like stems. By early summer the mature Japanese knotweed stems are hollow with purple speckles and are very tall. The leaf growth alternates on each side of the stem creating an obvious knotweed zigzag pattern. The white flowers are very small but numerous and they form showy, greenish-white branching panicles from the axils of upper leaves. Japanese knotweed usually flowers from July to September. Leaves are broadly ovate, square-cut or slightly angled at the base, abruptly pointed at the tip with the tip often stretched out and are hairless. The stalk is hollow.

Where to find: It grows through concrete, asphalt, dams, and buildings. It is a very tolerant plant and survives in a wide range of soil types. Grows in dense shady areas, sunny areas, high temperatures, cold temperatures, commonly found near water sources, in low-lying areas, and waste areas.

Edible parts: The best edible parts are the young shoots, preferably when they are about 6-8 inches tall. Depending on your taste buds you may think they have a lemony taste. Young shoots can be consumed raw or cooked and the growing tips and the unfurled leaves on the stalk and branches are edible. Stems can be sliced and steamed, simmered in soups, used in sauces, jams and fruit compotes.

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