

WILD EDIBLE PLANTS OKANAGAN VALLEY

By [Yrene](#) - Last updated on July 16, 2020 - [Wild Food](#)



Early Spring Foraging for wild edible plant

Spring has arrived early in the Okanagan and so has the time for foraging wild plants you can eat.

The milder climate here has a bit more to offer in regard to early spring wild edible plants than the colder regions of Canada, where the earth stays frozen much longer into the year.

Fresh greens are sparse during the winter month. I try to buy local and organic food and don't like the imported green selection at the local supermarkets. To see young dandelion leaves emerge and stinging nettle patches is a good feeling and inspires healthy eating habits.



Everything seems to come alive with the arrival of the Robin and other beautiful birds, that left to go South last fall. The last couple of days I noticed the hummingbirds looking for my feeder. To think, that these little creatures come back each year and remember where the food was is quite amazing.

The landscape changes to a lush green and the smell of cherry blossoms is in the air. Although I like each season for what it has to offer, spring is the most rewarding one.

In early spring, as soon as the snow starts to melt, I walk in the forest looking for early spring wild edible plants.

What a surprise I had a few days ago seeing a few Morel on the side of the trail. How more lucky can I be? I wonder whether they've been growing here all the past years and I never notice them.

I only know morels from books and I have often seen the dried once for sale, with a huge price tag, not for me to buy. And now I see them here, on my land, only a handful but what a gift. I will be out there the next few days foraging for mushrooms.

Dandelion, one of the abundant wild edible plants



You can find them nearly everywhere and they cover large fields here in the [Okanagan Valley](#). For many people, they are considered a pest, and I guess they don't belong on a golf lawn.

I just love them, when the flower buds are in full bloom. Young dandelion leaves are delicious in salads. The slightly bitter taste mixes well with other greens and the leaves can also be cooked like spinach, or used for teas. The roots can be made into a coffee substitute.

I have been making dandelion honey out of dandelion flowers for years. The beautiful smell in the kitchen when the flower buds are cooking makes you guess the delicious end result. Dandelion honey does not only taste yummy on home-baked bread, but it's also great on pancakes and can be used instead of maple syrup.

Stinging Nettle is a wild edible plant



Nettles may not be the first thing that comes to your mind when you think about wild edible plants. How do nettles benefit from stinging us I wonder? If

they wouldn't sting, they would be eaten by animals and maybe there wouldn't be enough for us to consume. Surely it's to keep animals from eating them.

Stinging nettle leaves, stems and roots are all edible parts of the plant. Young leaves are the nicest. Nettles make an excellent spinach substitute and can be added to soups and stews. Until dried or cooked, stinging nettle leaves will have these stinging hairs – so remember, never eat them raw! Tea made from leaves is rich in iron and has other health benefits.

Stinging nettle is also used in alternative treatments and is mentioned in Albert Vogel's book "The nature Doctor", under various health subjects. Stinging nettles are highly recommended as a food source.

Always cover up your exposed skin when collecting stinging nettle.

This year I will dehydrate most of the leaves and mix them with my Wilderness Tea.

Elderberries

This shrub grows down at my horse barn close to the creek and seems to like some damp ground. I used to cut down the bushes before they were able to bloom, not knowing what they were.

The shrub grows up to thirteen feet high with a beautiful white cluster of flowers, looking like an umbrella. The flowers make wonderful food, and elderberry fritters are probably the best known.



Elderberry flowers mix well with mint and make a pleasant-tasting tea.

Later the dark berries can be gathered like the flowers. Elderberries should preferably be cooked. The berries are great to be included in baked goods.

Herbalists use elderberries for medical purposes. In one article I read that the berries can be boiled in vinegar to make a black hair dye. I haven't tried this yet.

Morel, the king of mushrooms



This tasty mushroom used to be found near elm trees and was harvested in a large amount, but now it is hard to find. People who know where they grow will not share their little secrets with you. To stumble upon them when you walk the forest is a special moment. You may spot it on chalky soil with ash, apple or pine in areas which were partly logged.

Morels come up in spring and are easy to identify. You may have to cover lots of ground to find one. If you do find one, slow down and concentrate your search in the surrounding area.

Morels live on the edge of forested areas. Look out for dead trees or check out old apple orchards.

Please note, also morels are easy to identify, if you have any doubt about a mushroom, don't keep it!

- [Memorable Morel Mushroom Hunt in the Yukon](#)

Other wild edible plants

This blog is only meant to stir your interest in wild edible plants. They are much more wild food available in spring, like Claytonia, a great salad leaf and Primrose, another salad green.

But I will talk more about them in another blog. I am anxious to go outside for the hunt and find these wonderful **wild edible plants**. Since I started with [geocaching](#) a while back, I might as well look for some caches as well.

Enjoy the hunt!

You can find many great books about foraging wild edible plants.



Best Books and Resources

- [Edible & Medicinal Plants of Canada](#) by Andy MacKinnon
- [Edible and Medicinal Plants of the Northwest](#) by J. Duane Sept

- [Identifying and Harvesting Edible and Medicinal Plants](#) by Steve Brill, Evelyn Dean
- [Arctic Plants: An Introduction to Edible and Medicinal Plants of the North](#) by Rebecca Hainnu