

## Foragers Sample Nature's Bounty

Difficulty:

**A**VERAGE

Date of release:

Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2012

### *Discussion activities to be done after completing this EA lesson*

Today's report is about edible wild plants. Why do some people want to learn how to identify these plants? What sorts of details do you have to look for in order to identify an edible wild plant? How easy is it to find these plants? Where do they grow?

### *Extension discussion topics*

#### **A. Talking about and going over the specific topic / idea / issue in listening text**

*Introduction = Why do some people want to learn how to identify these plants? When is a good time of year to find them? What plants do we learn about?*

1. Why is autumn a good time to go foraging for edible wild plants?

- Salad greens are tender, sweet, mild.
- Tree nuts are abundant.
- There are still some berries and fruits available.

When do you think is the best time to forage for edible wild plants in your area?

2. What reasons do people have for taking a class on edible wild plants?

- Bob Heilen wants to be able to find food in case of an emergency where food is not available in stores.
- Tamae Heilen started cooking dandelions and then decided she wanted to learn more.
- Tim MacWelch says some people take his class because they are looking for new flavors that they can't find in store-bought food.

Would you take a class like this? Why or why not?

3. Which specific plant species do you remember hearing about? What did you learn about them?

- Dandelions: they grow in the Heilen's yard and Tamae cooks them.
- Yarrow: smells good.
- Wild carrots: tricky to identify. They have hairs on their stems. They can be confused with poison hemlock and fool's parsley.
- Poison hemlock and fool's parsley: smell bad, have no hairs, are deadly.

## B. Expanding on (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text

*Topic = Edible wild plants.*

1. Do you know what edible wild plants there are in your area? What plants are ready to eat at different times of the year? Do you go out foraging yourself? Which are your favorite plants to pick and eat?
2. In many places, people no longer know what wild plants can be eaten and which cannot. Do people in your area still have this knowledge? If it is limited, which plants do most people realize are edible?
3. What benefits do you think people can get from foraging for their own food? Can you think of any downsides with this practice?
4. What culinary (cooking) traditions are based on local edible wild plants in your area? Are there certain foods that are cooked for particular holidays because they are available at that time of year?

*OR, Topic = Edible wild plants in your area (or another place!).*

Find out about edible wild plants in your area (or another part of the world if you prefer) and give an oral presentation of your findings to a partner or to your teacher. You can use a search engine (like Google) to look up "edible wild plants" and the name of the place you want to study, for example.

## C. Extending discussion of (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text

*Topic = Outdoor survival skills.*

1. Tim MacWelch and Earth Connections teach other classes on outdoor survival skills in addition to teaching about edible wild plants. What types of things do you think you would need to know in order to be able to survive in the wild for 48 hours? For a week? For a year?
2. If you had to survive in the wild for a week, would you know what to do? What do you think would be your top three concerns?
3. If you knew you were going to have to live in the wild for two weeks without contact with the outside world, what would you bring with you? Make a list of 10 "must-have" items for two weeks alone in the wild, in the spring (so it's not too hot, not too cold). Assume that you are going to a place where fresh water is available, but not necessarily safe to drink.

## Audioscript

Tim MacWelch doesn't recommend plucking weeds from your yard and eating them - ["They're juicy, they're sour. They're really good"] - until you've done some research. - ["There's plenty of bad plants out there that stay on my radar." ]

["And what is this?"]

MacWelch has been a student of outdoor survival skills since he was a teenager and took up backpacking. "I thought that if I could find everything I needed out in the woods, then I wouldn't have to bring it with me."

["There's thousands of them on these trees, but they're not suitable food."]

He founded Earth Connection in 1997 to share his expertise.

["And since these have opened, the pine nuts have probably already all dropped out."]

MacWelch has had as many as two dozen students in classes. Today, he has two, Tamae and Bob Heilen.

"I'd like to be able to know that if there were an emergency and I couldn't get food in the store that I'd be able to find food on my own, but also, my wife and I, we like to... we like to learn new things."

"Recently I start cooking wild plants like dandelion in our yard. And it tastes really good, and then finally I decided, okay, yeah, I want to study."\*

["Steamed, fried, anything."]

Here on Earth Connection's four-hectare property - ["Very, very common"] -, the Heilens are learning about dandelions - ["Give that a smell"] - and other edible plants, like yarrow - ["Smells really good"] - , and wild carrots - ["Yes, smells like carrots"].

But MacWelch cautions, carrots can be tricky to identify.

"Now, what we're looking for are hairs on the stems. If there's no hairs on this, and it smells bad, you're looking at a poison hemlock or a fool's parsley, both of which are deadly."

Autumn is a good time to forage, MacWelch says.

"The salad greens that are out there are very mild and tender and sweet. Your tree nuts are abundant. There are still some berries and even some fruits in the end of the season."

["One of these cute little red rose hips, there was a rose..."]

But even with fruits and berries, he cautions, you have to be careful. "About half of the red berries are edible to a human."

"We want to always check every berry that we're going to consider for food."

MacWelch says some students take his class on wild edibles because they're searching for new flavors. "There's stuff out here that is rare, that is not easily transported, stuff that is just off the radar of normal, you know, food consumption in America."

And stuff that may very well be growing in many Americans' own back yards. - ["So this is called spicebush."] - It just requires a little searching. "You're on this mission to find this thing and you're not sure where it is, but you know it's out there and you know it is going to be good if you get it."

["And then the acorn can last in the freezer..."]

Tim MacWelch offers his wild edible class every season of the year, as well as other classes in wilderness survival.

Susan Logue, VOA News, Somerville, Virginia.

\* A native speaker would probably say something like: *"Recently I **started** cooking wild plants like dandelions **from** our yard. And it **tasted** really good, and then finally I decided, okay, yeah, I want to study."*