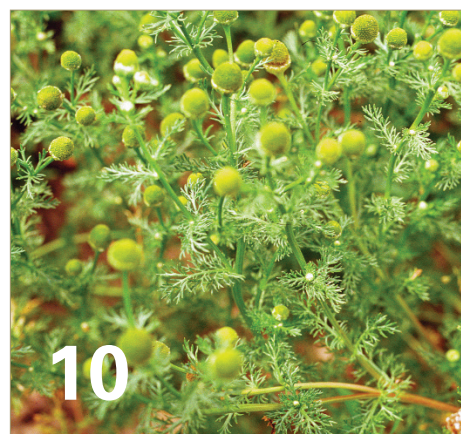
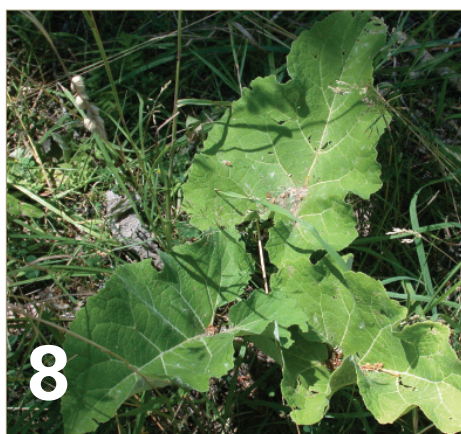




EDIBLE WEEDS OF THE HOME AND GARDEN

Not all plants are edible but there are some perfect for a plate



We have this mental image of **Brian Sebade** carrying a container of salad dressing wherever he goes in Wyoming. That's *PROBABLY* not true. He is the University of Wyoming Extension educator serving southeast Wyoming and can be reached at (307) 721-2571 or bsebade@uwyo.edu.

Brian Sebade

Did you know some of the more common weeds are considered edible and have a long history of being eaten by humans?

As you work diligently in your garden pulling certain weeds, you might consider how they would look on your dinner plate.

What to Look for and What to Avoid

Not all plants are edible. There are many plants native to Wyoming or introduced from another continent that are poisonous to humans and livestock. Wyoming is host to some of the most poisonous plants in North America, such as poison hemlock. There is also a chance you might be allergic or have other negative reactions to a new plant. Please consult a physician or medical professional before eating new or different plants and be positive you have correctly identified any plant before consuming (some poisonous plants look very similar to non-poisonous plants).

Know what activities have occurred around or near any plant you are considering eating, including weeds. The plant may have been sprayed with a pesticide, encountered chemicals toxic to humans, or has been urinated or defecated on by pets or wildlife. Avoid weeds growing in soils with chemical contamination.

Avoid weeds near streets and roads, weeds in alleys or driveways, and areas that receive lots of human and domesticated animal exposure.

Weeds most likely can be safely consumed in areas of your property absent of the above activities.

As holds true with eating almost any common food, moderation is key when eating plants. Begin with a small amount to see if it agrees with you.

What's a weed? We can define weeds as plants not easily killed and that negatively interfere with human activities and goals. A plant that might be a weed to one person may not be a weed to others. There are many undesired plants as we look around Wyoming in our backyards, gardens, fields, pastures, and rangelands.

Ways to Consume Weeds

Depending on the plant, all or certain parts of the plant are edible. There are many ways to prepare and consume edible weeds. The simplest is eating weeds raw. Plants like dandelion, some thistles, lambsquarter, purslane, redroot pigweed, and plantain have all been consumed raw. These plants are best early in the season when leaves and stems are tender and young.

Older plants generally have more stringent tastes and harder textures. Once plants become older, cooking for preparation is more common.

Plants should be thoroughly washed before consumption, and finding a recipe that cooks a plant is an added food safety step to avoid bacterial contamination issues.

Consider These

Some common weeds found in yards, gardens, and pastures that have been consumed include:

1) **Dandelion**, *Taraxacum officinale*, is an introduced perennial plant from Europe often found in yards and disturbed areas with bright yellow flowers that bloom in the spring. The leaves and flowers are often consumed.

2) **Broadleaf plantain**, *Plantago major*, is another introduced plant from Europe found growing in yards and disturbed areas of backyards and landscapes. The leaves are often eaten.

3) **Lamb's quarter**, *Chenopodium album*, is a common annual weed of landscapes and gardens. The leaves of lamb's quarter are most commonly consumed.

4) **Common purslane**, *Portulaca oleracea*, is a low-growing annual weed found in wet areas of gardens and landscapes. The succulent leaves of these plants are often consumed.

5) **Canada thistle**, *Cirsium arvense*, is a very common perennial plant of gardens and landscapes with spiny leaves and purple flowers. The stems of Canada thistle are sometimes consumed once the leaves and spines have been carefully removed.

6) **Redroot pigweed**, *Amaranthus retroflexus*, is an annual weed common of gardens and landscapes. The leaves and seeds are often consumed.

7) **Pennycress**, *Thlaspi arvense*, is an annual weed of the mustard family. The seeds of penny cress are edible.

8) **Common burdock**, *Arctium minus*, is a large biennial weed with purple flowers and Velcro-like seeds when mature. The roots of burdock have been eaten.

9) **Shepherd's purse**, *Capsella bursa-pastoris*, is an annual weed found in gardens and landscapes with heart-shaped seeds that can be consumed.

10) **Pineapple weed**, *Matricaria matricariodes*, is an annual weed common of landscapes and disturbed areas. Many people think this plant smells like pineapple. The leaves and flowers are often eaten.