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EC9933 Nebraska's Wild Greens

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April
1940

Nebraska
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK
IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS
U. of N. Agr. College & U. S. Dept. of Agr. Cooperating
W. H. Brockaw, Director, Lincoln

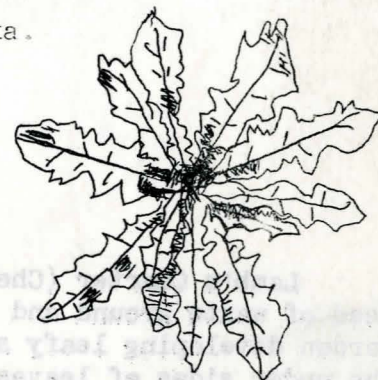
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NEBRASKA'S WILD GREENS

In the spring and early summer wild greens that grow in vacant lots, along roadsides and fields may be used to add variety to menus and bring good health to the family. They may be had just for the gathering so they save us money as well as supply large quantities of iron, calcium, and vitamins. Greens are rich in vitamin A, B, and G and when eaten raw most of them are good sources of vitamin C. The iron and calcium found in greens help to keep the blood and other body fluids in good condition and to build up bones and teeth. They regulate body process and safeguard against infection.

Pictured below are some wild greens obtainable in Nebraska.

Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*). Abundant in fields, lawns, meadows, roadsides and open woodlands. Easiest to handle and wash if plant is cut off at root crown so that the cluster of leaves holds together. After flowering, plants become tough and somewhat bitter. May be canned for winter use.



Water cress (*Radicula Nasturtium - aquaticum*). Found along edges of cold brooks and spring-fed pools all the year long. Best in spring and late autumn. Wash thoroly. Use raw or cooked. Beware of taking plants from contaminated water.



Stinging Nettle (*Urtica*). Grows along roadsides, waste places, fence rows and moist ground. Use very young leaves. Cooked.



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Dock (*Rumex crispus*). Common in both cultivated and waste ground. Young tender leaves and stems are best. Cook by itself or in combination with other greens.



Lamb's Quarter (*Chenopodium album*). A common weed of waste ground and cultivated fields and garden developing leafy stems two to five feet tall. The under sides of leaves and the stems have a mealy-white covering. Should be gathered when young. After cultivation fresh plants may appear in midsummer or later.



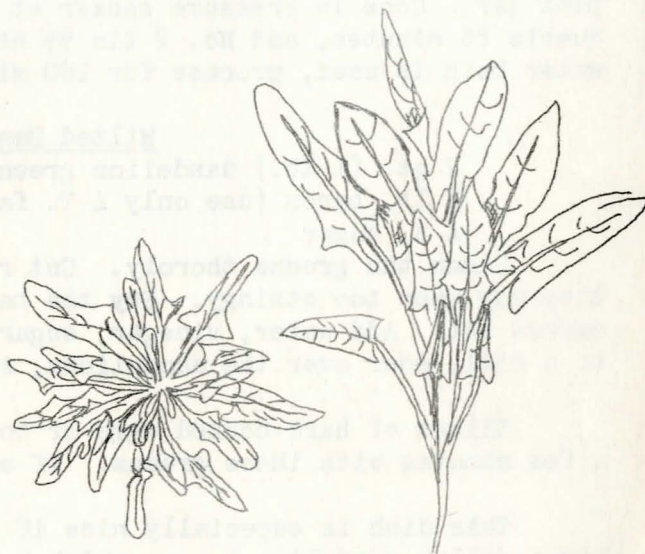
Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*). Found in waste places along roadsides and the like. Leaves closely resemble dandelion. Later it sends up a branching stem with bright blue flowers. Cook rosette of root leaves as pot herbs or use raw for salad. After blooming they are tough and too strong in flavor.



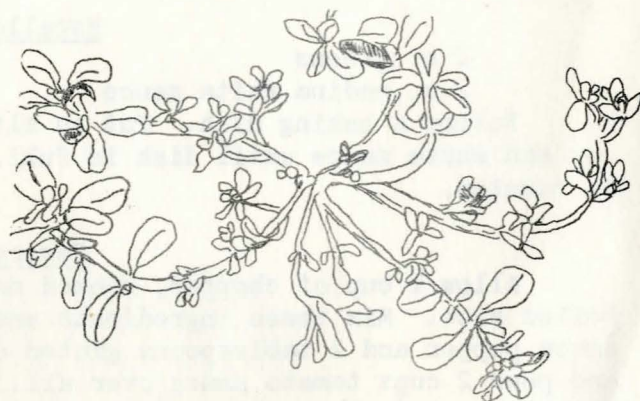
Pokeweed or soko (*Phytolacca americana*). A tall leafy perennial, pointed smooth leaves, greenish flowers followed by dark blue non-edible berries. Only young shoots are suitable for eating. The root and berries are poisonous. Cook plant like other greens, discarding the first water.



Sorrel (*Rumex Acetosella*, *Rumex Acetosa*). Two species, one small and one large, are here illustrated. Both grow in cultivated and recently tilled soil, neglected fields and old grass lands. The leaves have a slightly sour taste. It is best for greens if gathered young. In cultivated soil fresh growth appears well along into the summer.



Purslane or Pursley (*Portulaca oleracea*). Abundant in gardens and waste places. Eaten raw or cooked (steamed). Combines well with other greens such as Lamb's Quarter or Mustard. Esteemed as a great delicacy in other lands.



Greens should be fresh, young and tender. When used in their fruited or flowered stage, they are strong and bitter to the taste. Wash greens in several waters and discard imperfect parts.

The greens may be served raw in a salad. The combination of two or more kinds with contrasting flavors makes an interesting salad. French dressing is often served with green salads. Chopped greens may be used to garnish creamed potatoes, creamed fish, or creamed eggs.

Cook mild flavored greens in little or no water as quickly as possible and remove the lid as soon as steam begins to form. These directions, if followed, help to preserve the green color of the vegetable greens, destroys very little vitamin and less mineral will be dissolved in the cooking water. Soda should not be added to greens while cooking as it destroys vitamin C and injures the texture.

Some wild greens are unpalatable and others are actually poisonous so it would be best to use only the greens illustrated here or known by experience to be edible.

Surplus greens may be canned in the same way as other foods are canned. Roughly speaking it takes a quart of well packed down greens to fill a one pint jar. Cook in pressure cooker at 15 pounds, glass pints 60 minutes, glass quarts 65 minutes, and No. 2 tin 55 minutes, No 2½ tin 60 minutes. If boiling water bath is used, process for 180 minutes.

Wilted Dandelions with Bacon

2 qt. (1 lb.) dandelion greens	½ c. vinegar or to taste
¼ lb. bacon (use only 4 T. fat)	½ c. water or less
4 t. sugar	1 t. salt

Clean the greens thoroly. Cut rather finely with scissors, otherwise they may seem too stringy. Fry the bacon until crisp and brown; pour off excess fat. Add water, vinegar, sugar, and salt to the remaining fat, bring to a boil, pour over the dandelions, simmer 1 minute, and serve.

Slices of hard-cooked eggs or boiled beets or carrots may be simmered a few minutes with these greens. If eggs are used, omit sugar.

This dish is especially nice if one takes pains to collect those tender light yellow dandelion leaves which have grown covered from light by a board, or which have been blanched by some other method. Thus it may be enjoyed at almost any season.

Escalloped Greens

2 c. greens	4 hard boiled eggs
2 c. medium white sauce	

Butter a baking dish. Put in alternate layers of greens, slices of egg and white sauce until dish is full. Cover with buttered crumbs and bake 15 minutes.

Savory Greens

Allow 1 cup of chopped, cooked meat to 1¼ cups chopped greens and 2 cups boiled rice. Mix these ingredients and season with 1 teaspoon salt, 1/8 tea-spoon pepper and 2 tablespoons grated onion. Turn mixture into a casserole and pour 2 cups tomato sauce over all. Bake in a moderate (350° F.) oven until thoroly heated, then remove from oven, sprinkle with grated cheese and serve.

(Prepared by Mabel Doremus, State Extension Agent, Foods and Nutrition. Description and pictures of plants taken from pamphlet "Food and Health from Wild Greens or Pot Herbs in New York State", published by the Nutrition Service, New York State Department of Health.)