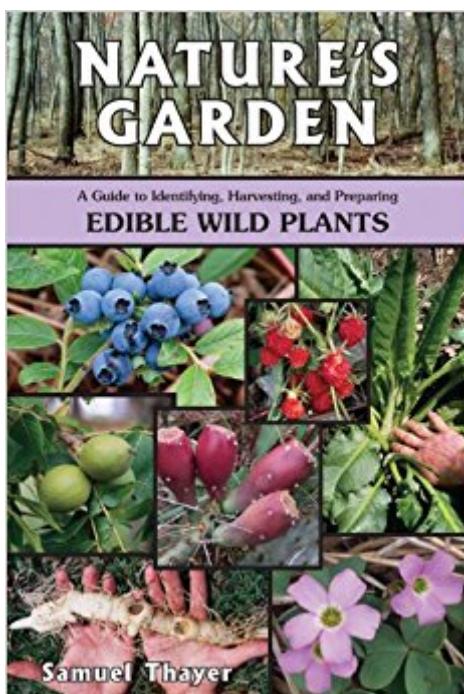


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# Nature's Garden: A Guide To Identifying, Harvesting, And Preparing Edible Wild Plants



## Synopsis

A detailed guide to 41 of the most widespread wild foods in North America, covering how to find and identify them, which parts are used, when and how to harvest them, and how to prepare them for the table. The cultural and natural history of the plants are also discussed. There is no overlap between the plants covered in this book and *The Forager's Harvest*.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

These are not good times to put out a book on edible wild plants. Unless you're Samuel Thayer. When I reviewed Thayer's first book, *The Foragers Harvest*, I wrote that it is as good or better than anything available on the topic. It has since become the go-to book for students at the Jack Mountain Bushcraft School. His new book, *Nature's Garden*, builds upon the high standard set by *The Foragers Harvest* and establishes him as the leading authority and author on edible wild plants that has ever published. It isn't slightly better than other books on the topic; it's in a whole different league. The meat of the book is made up of plant accounts. These are in-depth profiles of edible plants, full of photos of how to identify, harvest and use them. The author bases all of his work on personal experience, so there aren't the usual falsehoods handed down by authors of lesser works. Instead, you get what works, along with anecdotal stories of how the author got to know the individual plants and how he's used them in the past. His writing style is conversational, and while there is a description for each plant that includes botanical terminology, the author writes it so as to make it accessible to the non-botanist. The numerous photos contribute greatly to aid the neophyte in identifying the individual species. The Harvest And Preparation section for each plant is

where the author's experience really shines. Whereas the Peterson's Field Guide To Edible Wild Plants will list "starchy root" or similar descriptive term after a plant, Thayer has several pages of highly descriptive how-to information. To use a specific example, most books on edible plants have a sentence or two on acorns. Nature's Garden has 50 pages.

Whether you're a newbie or an experienced forager, you'll find this book fascinating and a must-own. I have over 200 books on edible wild plants, and this is far and away the best ever published. A visual and informative treat that is hard to put down, its 512 pages are well illustrated with 415 color photos. Sam brings us fresh insights on 41 new plants. ("New" because the first book in Sam's series, *The Forager's Harvest: A Guide to Identifying, Harvesting, and Preparing Edible Wild Plants* covered 32 other plants.) One of the great things about Sam's writing is that it is absolutely authentic, based on first-hand knowledge. For instance, every one of the 32 plants in *TFH* is one that Sam has eaten at least 50 times. A second thing that distinguishes Sam's work from other authors is that Sam has a great curiosity. He doesn't hesitate to question edible wild plant claims made by other authors. He delves into research reports and studies, experiments on his own and keeps track of his findings like a scientist. His "Nature's Garden" account on acorns is 51 pages long, and contains information and a synthesis of material and insights that you'll not find anywhere else. One of the plants included in *NG* is garlic mustard, which I had written off as an edible that wasn't to my liking. I've cooked and eaten the leaves, the flower buds, and the tuberous root. I've nibbled on the bitter, pungent seeds. In his chapter on garlic mustard, Sam writes that the young, succulent stalks, stripped of leaves before the plant blooms, are mild, sweet and juicy.

This excellent book is a continuation of the fine work Sam started with his first book, *A Forager's Harvest*. This book covers new plants and is a whopping 512 pages; large when you consider that most wild food books fall in the range of 180 to 300 pages. And again, even though most of the plants are found in the eastern states, many have a wide range, or they are edible weeds found everywhere, or they are native eastern plants planted as ornamentals in neighborhoods and streets across the continent, or they are cousins of eastern plants, like the western huckleberries are to blueberries. So many of the plants he covers are accessible just about anywhere except for the desert, the Everglades, and higher elevations. And the depth of coverage of each plant makes this book valuable to those who really want to know plants. The book is divided into two parts: The first 74 pages cover conceptual ideas such as where to forage, why eat wild foods, environmental considerations, plant identification, his take on the public perception of the dangerousness of plants,

and his take on Chris McCandless' death (as portrayed in Jon Krakauer's book, "Into the Wild"). I particularly liked Sam's personal account of "One Month Eating Wild". His experience has a lot to teach those thinking about living off of wild foods; a common fantasy of us testosterone-poisoned males. The last 304 pages cover plants, a chapter at a time. Sam provides useful detail on the foods generated from each plant. He covers plants that no one has really covered well before. His American lotus and black nightshade chapters were just fun for me to read, even as a seasoned professional. And I love the foods he's generated with acorns. His acorn chapter alone could be a small book at 51 pages.

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