

Day 5: The Future of Food

Eating Wild

Humans have been collecting food from the wild since before recorded history (~200k years ago). It's only in the relatively recent history (10-15k years ago) that agriculture was first practiced. Foraging (or other ways to gather wild food, such as hunting or fishing) is the most direct means to connect to nature through food. Today, we'll do a bit of foraging outside then head inside to discuss ecological foodways, such as foraging, and the future of food.

Foraging Basics

1. Know what you're eating!

- *Never consume anything if you don't know what it is* or if the specific tissue is edible. Species and individual tissues vary in terms of their edibility. For example, the fruit of saskatoon are edible but the leaves contain high levels of cyanogenic compounds.
- Take pics instead of collecting. This can help you identify and even determine where you found something. Focus on flowers, fruits, leaves and the habitat.
- Get familiar new plants by collecting multiple times prior to using.

2. Consider the impacts of what you're collecting.

- Prior to collecting, familiarize yourself with the legality and ethics of the location and organism. Focusing on public spaces and un-wanted species (e.g. invasives) is generally a good idea.

3. Make sure to collect safely.

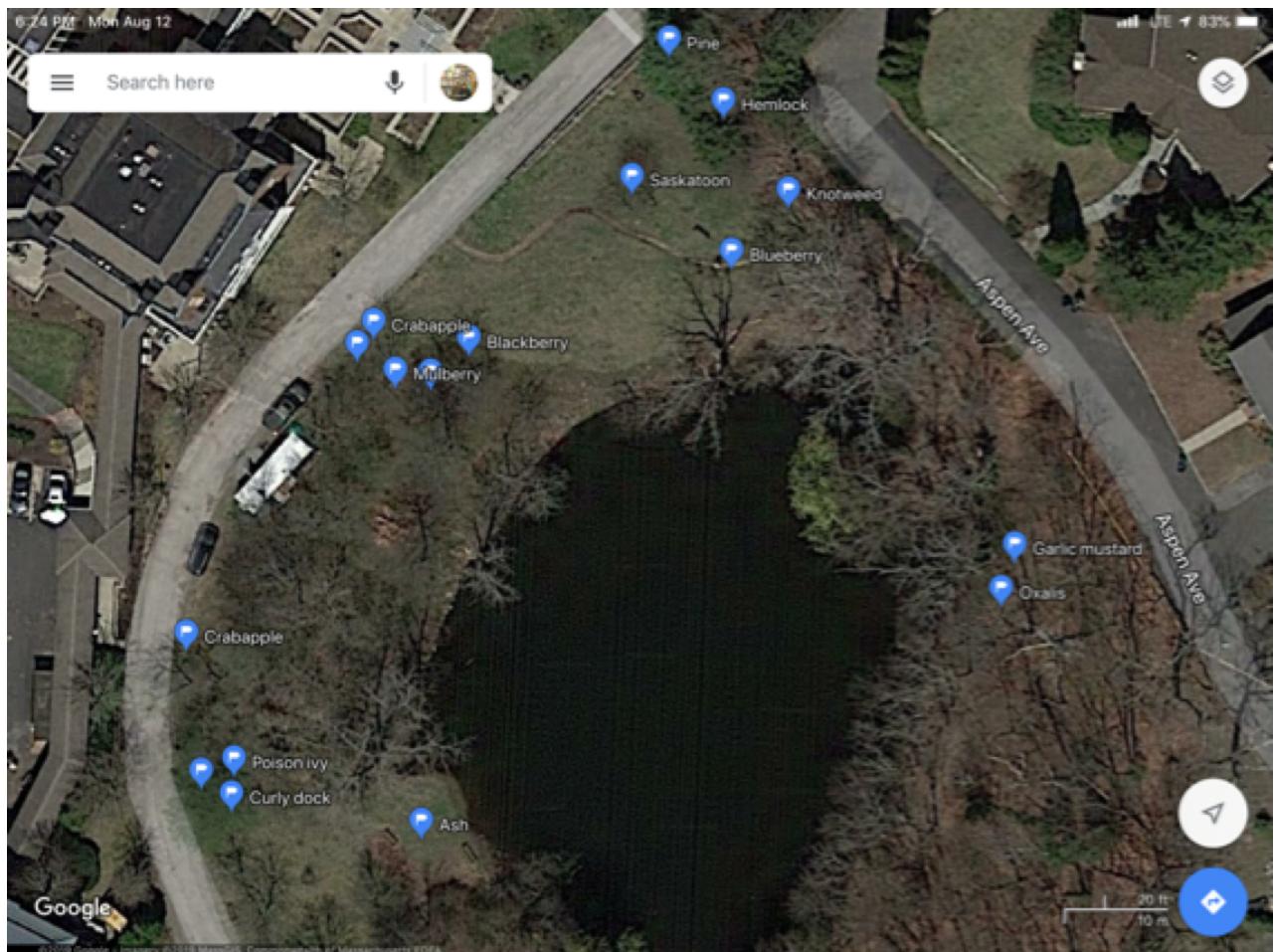
- Avoid contaminated locations (e.g. roadside, golf-course, industry).
- Recent studies found comparably low/safe heavy metal levels in foraged foods in [Boston, MA](#) and [Berkeley, CA](#).
- Be careful of allergens that you know you're sensitive to.
- Look out for harmful organisms, such as ticks and poison ivy.

4. Bring a few helpful tools: bags, basket/pack, knife, trowel/shovel, picker.

5. Consult with a local expert first!

- No one knows if something is edible until someone eats it.
- There is broad variation in some organisms over space and time.
- Look for regional expertise relevant to your area:
 - www.eattheweeds.com/foraging/foraging-instructors/
 - www.foraging.com

Edible Shrubs and Trees at Lasell Village Pond



A quick map I made after a single visit to the pond behind Lasell Village.

- Saskatoon or juneberry (*Amelanchier* spp.): edible berries early summer.
- <http://www.eattheweeds.com/amelanchier-arborea-busting-out-all-over-2/>



- Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*): edible young leaves, older leaves make a nice tisane.



- Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*): many edible parts, including inner bark, pollen, young shoots and strobili. Also makes a nice tisane.



- Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*): young shoots are edible early spring to fall.
- <http://www.eattheweeds.com/japanese-knotweed-dreadable-edible/>



- Crab apple (*Malus sieversii* and *M. domesticus*): fruits are edible but highly variable.
Can be great made into a sauce or roasted.
- <http://www.eattheweeds.com/apples-wild-crabapples/>



- **Look out for Poison Ivy (*Rhus toxicodendron*)!!**
- Has compound leaves arranged with usually three leaflets that have moderate to strong asymmetry. It produces white berries. All parts of the plant contain some amount of the skin irritating compound, urushiol.



Tisane: Hemlock and Pine

The needles of Eastern Hemlock trees were a common drink consumed by loggers in New England. Loggers would carry a small kettle and cup that they would use to make a cup of "tea" when they were out cutting wood.

Discussion: Future of Food

Foraging from uncultivated and wild landscapes is arguably the basis of foodways that are most strongly connected to nature. In the context of large-scale environmental change (e.g. climate, population growth, landuse, urbanization), what are the ecological foodways that will be challenged and what foodways can support the adaptation of the human niche in the future?

Readings

- [Sherman and Dooley 1-27](#): indigenous chef collective.
- [Humphreys 1-21](#): apples and landscape memory.
- [Shepherd 233-241](#): flavor in human development and aging.
- [Noonan 2017](#): smell as an indicator of mental health in aging.

Weekly Forage

Two "farm-to-table" restaurants in Newton, MA.

- [Sycamore sycamorennewton.com](#)
- [Farmstead Table farmsteadtable.com](#)

References

-  [Zachos1-14.pdf](#)
Aug 12, 2019
- Boston forage safety study: <https://civileats.com/2015/11/11/is-urban-foraging-cities-safe-to-eat-boston>
- Berkeley forage safety study: <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0202450>
 - Both of these articles also found higher levels of micronutrients in foraged foods relative to commercial equivalents (e.g. crab apples versus conventional apples).