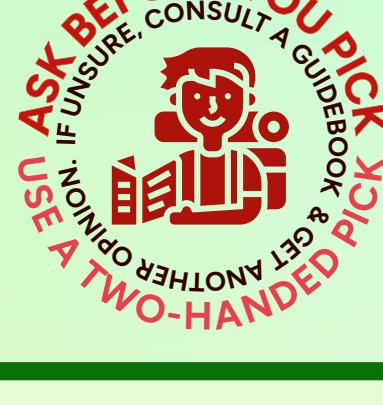


Common Wild Edibles of NC for Educators



Common yard weeds



Chickweed *Stellaria media*

soft, round stems with opposite, oval to pointy leaves & tiny white star shaped flowers, all edible. Harvest early winter to late spring. Non-native.



Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*

entirely edible. May be confused with wild lettuce, also edible; no poisonous look-a-likes. Non-native.



Plantain *Plantago*

Ground-hugging rosettes of smooth leaves with parallel veins. Young leaves and seed heads are edible. Medicinal, apply to wounds. Non-native.



Field Garlic/Onion Grass *Allium vineale* has long, slender, tubular, green leaves that grow up to 2' tall from underground bulbs. ***Allium canadense***, wild onion, has flat leaves & grows to 14". Found fall, winter & spring in fields & open areas. Blooms late spring in pom-pom clusters of pink to white flowers. Non-native. **Warning:** Nothing that smells like onions is poisonous but there are extremely toxic, look-a-likes including death camas (*Zigadenus*) & fly poison (*Amianthium muscaetoxicum*).



Henbit *Lamium amplexicaule*

heart shaped, jagged leaves.

Purple Dead Nettle *Lamium purpureum*

triangular, hairy leaves.



Both have purple flowers & square stem. All parts can be eaten. Early fall/winter to late spring. Both are non-native.



Sorrel *Oxalis stricta*

small, 3-part, heart-shaped leaves with tiny yellow flowers.

Spring to summer.

Native. **Warning:** Oxalic acid can damage the kidney. Drink plenty of water & eat in small quantities.



Cattails *Typha latifolia*

grow in sunny, wet, open areas 3'-10' tall densely. Swordlike, pointed leaves atop edible shoots; Edible male pollen-producing flower growing on top of female flower. Harvest shoots in early May & pollen/male flowers June-July. Native.



Sassafras Leaves

(lobed like a mitten, goosefoot or entire) & roots edible; smell & taste like root beer.

Harvest sparingly May-Oct.

Native.



Spicebush *Lindera benzoin*

Understory shrub with oval, smooth, tipped leaves. Aromatic leaves, red, oval berries & twigs edible. **Harvest sparingly**; berries in late summer/early fall. Native.



Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*

has a ribbed, hollow stem, 2'-7' tall with coarsely toothed, dark green opposite leaves; **covered in tiny stinging hairs**. Harvest carefully and cook to remove the sting. Late spring to first frost. Native.



Wild Ginger *Asarum canadense*

Leaves, stems & rhizomes edible. Harvest sparingly! **Warning:** May contain aristolochic acid; treat as seasoning. Native.



Pine *Pinus*

Green needles, young tips, buds & pollen edible. **Warning:** Contains phytoestrogens. Native.

Fruit (in harvest order)



Mulberry *Morus rubra*: Tree with rough, reddish bark and toothed, oval leaves. Fruit starts white/green turns red and then black when ripe. Ripens May-June. Native.



Passion flower/ Maypop *Passiflora incarnata*: Trailing vine with an unique purple flower and fruit with sour, sweet pulp. Ripens in September. Native.



Blueberry *Vaccinium*: Fruit grow on bushes with smooth, ellipitical short-stalked alternate leaves. Ripens in June. Native.



Silverberry/Autumn Olive *Elaeagnus*: Shrub has long, elliptical leaves with a silver underside & edible orange-red berries with silver flecks & a sweet-tart flavor. Ripens in September through mid-October. Non-native.



Blackberry *Rubus argustus*: Fruit grows on thorny, reddish brown canes with oval, serrated leaves. Harvest late June to mid-July. Native.



Persimmon *Diospyros virginiana*: Tree with thick, grayish black, scaly bark and orange fruit. Ripens in late summer through fall. Harvest when soft. Native. **Unripe fruit is astringent.**



Wild Grapes *Vitis*: Woody vines with edible lobed maple-like leaves; most grapes are deep purple when ripe. Ripens in late summer/early fall. Native.

Flowers



Honeysuckle *Lonicera japonica* grow on vines with opposite, oval, straight-edged leaves. Suck honey out of stem of white to yellow flowers. Harvest May through summer. Non-native invasive.



Wisteria Climbing, woody vine with 2" long, alternate leaves and an edible purple clusters of flowers. Harvest Apr-May. Non-native invasive & Native varieties. **Other parts of the plant are poisonous.**



Redbud *Cercis canadensis* is a native tree with purplish pink edible blooms that cover the bare branches in late winter. Harvest before fully open for best flavor. Native.



Wild Rose/rose hips *Rosa* have edible five petal fragrant flowers on top trailing or climbing thorny branches with alternate, feathery, compound leaves. Harvest flowers in late spring and hips/fruit in late fall. Native.



Violets *Viola*: heart-shaped leaves 2-4" long & wide with blue/violet and white flowers in a 5-petal butterfly shape. Young leaves and flowers are edible. Mid-spring to fall. Native. **Warning:** Dwarf larkspur (*Delphinium tricorne*) & Southern blue monkshood (*Aconitum uncinatum*) are very poisonous look-a-likes but have very different leaves and growth.

Avoid these plants. . .



POISON OAK & IVY

POISON HEMLOCK



DOG FENNEL



HORSE NETTLE

POKE WEED

**AND ANY OTHER PLANTS
YOU HAVE NOT RESEARCHED FULLY.**

Recommended Guides:

Edible Wild Plants of the Carolinas by Lytton John Musselman & Peter W. Schafran

Southeast Foraging by Chris Bennett

Additional Sources:

Flora of the Southeastern United States: <https://fsus.ncbg.unc.edu/>

NC Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox: <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/>

Common Wild Edible Mushrooms of NC

Morels

Spongely or honeycombed cap that does not drape from stalk. Inside longitudinal section reveals single hollow chamber from base to top of cap.

Found in early Spring on the ground in woods and field.



Poisonous look-a-likes: Wrinkled Thimble cap (with a coarsely wrinkled, draping cap) & Conifer False Morel (brain-like cap with multi-chambered inside) mushrooms.



Oyster Mushrooms

Fan or oyster shell shaped clustered mushrooms. White to pale brown or grey smooth capped with white to yellowish cream gills. Descending short, lateral, white downy stalk. No poisonous look-a-likes!

Found during cool, wet periods year round but generally in Spring & Fall on deciduous trees, logs or stumps.

Chantrelles & Black Trumpets

Whitish, yellow, orange or reddish mushroom with smooth cap edge inrolled, lobed or wavy; fake, forked gill-like ridges or smooth undersurface.

Black trumpets are smooth, hollow & dark brown.

Found Summer through early Fall on ground in woods, often by waterways.



Poisonous look-a-like: Jack-o-Lantern mushrooms grow on decayed wood & have true, unforked gills.



Chicken of the Woods

Shelflike, stalkless and in overlapping clusters found on trees, stumps or logs mid Spring through late Fall. Upper surface smooth to suedelike and bright orange. Undersurface yellow with tiny pores. Can refruit in the same place for several years.

Avoid those growing on hemlock, other conifers or honey locust trees as they may cause stomach upset.



Others:

Beefsteak, Cauliflower, Comb Tooth, Hedgehog, Honey, Indigo Milk Cap, Leatherback, Lions Mane, Lobster, Maitake and Puffballs.

Beware of poisonous look-a-likes!



Recommended Guidebook:

A Field Guide to Mushrooms of the Carolinas by Alan Bessette, Arleen R. Bessette, and Michael Hopping

Additional Sources:

Bessette, A. (2015). *Mushrooms of the Southeastern United States*. Syracuse University Press.

Britannica (2024, June 20). *mushroom*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/science/mushroom>

Fischer, D. W., & Bessette, A. E. (1992). *Edible wild mushrooms of North America : a field-to-kitchen guide*. University of Texas Press.