

PRESERVING THE WILD HARVEST

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Harvesting Guidelines

- Ideally harvest in the morning, after the dew has burnt off, but before it gets hot
- Bring multiple bags (paper, cloth, or mesh): it's easier to separate your harvest in the field
- Be prepared with the proper, well-maintained tools (pruners, knives/digging utensils)
- Dress for the weather and protection from brambles, poison ivy, and insects
- Bring a cooler if necessary
- Process your harvest asap

Processing/Preserving Options & Guidelines

| Method | Pro | Con |
|-------------------|--|---|
| Freezing | Quick & Easy | Electric, freezer space, freezer burn |
| Air Dry | Free/Passive energy | Need good ventilation, low humidity, consistent temp. |
| Dehydration | Quick, works well | Electric, can be labor intensive |
| Fermentation, etc | Tasty, probiotics, preserves for a long time | Requires extra materials, labor intensive |
| Canning | Long preservation, no freezer space needed | Energy & labor intensive |

Storage

- Be sure material is completely dry before storing. It should break easily, but not be brittle.
- Store in a glass jar, not exposed to sunlight.
- Flowers and leaves store for 6 months to 2 years; roots, twigs, & mushrooms store for 2 to 5 years.
- Material should look and smell vibrant, like it looked and smelled while alive.

Pickles

Any wild root, like Jerusalem artichoke (sunchokes), burdock, dandelion, or chicory. *These roots are all high in inulin. Inulin is a prebiotic, or food for the probiotics in our guts. However, eaten in quantity, they can cause gastric upset. So...everything in moderation.

<https://moonwiseherbs.com/herbal-recipes/>

<http://honest-food.net/2012/11/16/pickled-jerusalem-artichokes-recipe/>

Super Simple Wild Vinegar

Herb choices: evergreen needles, weeds (below), roots

Pour apple cider vinegar over fresh and/or dried herbs in a glass jar, at least one inch above the top of the herbs.

Add a chopped clove of garlic or some wild onion tops and/or bulbs for extra kick and nutrients.

Cover and place in a stable environment.

Shake daily for 2-6 weeks.

Strain.

Combine one tablespoon of vinegar with a teaspoon of honey and a pinch of cayenne pepper for a daily tonic. This is also great mixed with oil for salad dressings, added to soups, used as a marinade, dashed over cooked greens (my fave) or given away as a gift. Apple cider vinegar is a health tonic, undergoing lots of current research for uses like lowering cholesterol, helping with digestion, and balancing blood sugar.

Wild Greens Pesto

Ingredients:

2 c wild greens (chickweed, wintercress/creasy greens, purple dead nettle, wild onions, dandelion, daylily, etc)

1/2 c nuts/seeds (sunflower, walnut, pecan, etc)

1/4 c + 1/8 c olive or other similar tasting oil

2-3 cloves garlic or an equal amount of wild onion tops and/or bulbs

dash salt

Directions:

Either don't wash greens, or wash and spin or allow to dry.

Grind garlic in food processor. Then add nuts/seeds and process until they make a coarse meal.

Add the greens to the food processor and process until chopped.

Add the first 1/4 c oil and salt. Process to combine the oil.

If pesto, is still too dry, add the rest of the oil and process. If still too dry, add a tiny little bit more oil. If too wet, add a little bit more greens. This is great for dipping, topping toast or sandwiches.

Berrylicious Syrup

Ingredients:

1/2 cup dried berries (double if fresh or frozen) (elderberry, blueberry, hawthorn, rose hip, etc)

1 qt water

1/2 - 1 cup sweetener of choice

Directions:

Add herbs to water in pot. Heat to a simmer.

Simmer uncovered until liquid is reduced by 1/2 (usually about 45 minutes). Strain.

Cool to below 110 degrees, if using honey (this keeps the enzymes in the honey alive and well), and stir in sweetener until dissolved.

Let cool completely.

Bottle, label, and refrigerate.

At our house, we enjoy a couple tablespoons every morning, especially in the flu season, for prevention. If we're exposed to those who are sick, we usually drink that amount a few times/day. When we're starting to come down with something, we'll take it as much as every hour. It's more of a tonic, so it's tough to consume too much.

Zatar

1 part/1/8c ground sumac berries (any red species)

1 part/1/8c powdered bee balm (*Monarda didyma*)

1 part/1/8c powdered stinging or wood nettle (*Laportea canadensis* or *Urtica dioica*)

Sea salt to taste

Combine and mix. You can substitute garden herbs, like oregano, thyme, or mint, for the wild herbs. This is great on lots of things, like hummus, cheese, popcorn, mushrooms, etc.

Honeys

Pretty much any herb can be infused into honey. It's a tasty way to take your medicine. Water is about the only thing that will make honey go bad, so if you are working with herbs with a high moisture content, wilt them first. All you have to do is cover your herbs with honey and wait. You can strain it after 2-4 weeks, or leave the herbs in. Some people like to powder their herbs, when leaving them in.

Tasty Tinctures

Make a tincture out of flavorful herbs, like sweet birch or sassafras. You can tincture them in brandy or rum for fun. Then, add maple syrup to sweeten. You could stir this into soda water or a cocktail. You could also make a blended tincture, adding sweet ingredients, like berries, and sweeten it to make a cordial.

More Resources & Recipes:

<http://www.thewanderschool.com/>

<http://www.gcc.mass.edu/permacultureblog/2013/08/21/goldenrod-honey/>

<http://rurification.blogspot.com/2012/09/autumn-olive-plum-chutney.html>

<http://www.wildmanstevebrill.com/>

<http://www.eattheweeds.com/>

<http://www.bloodandspicebush.com/blog>

Foraging & Feasting: A Field Guide & Wild Food Cookbook by Dina Falcone

The Forager's Harvest & Nature's Garden by Sam Thayer

Stalking the Wild Asparagus by Euell Gibbons

Foraging in the Southeast by Chris Bennett

Midwest Foraging by Lisa Rose