



“Musing from the Hill” by Susan Crossett

as seen on the *Dunkirk Observer* on Fridays
and the *Jamestown Post-Journal* on Saturdays



Finding New Things to Eat

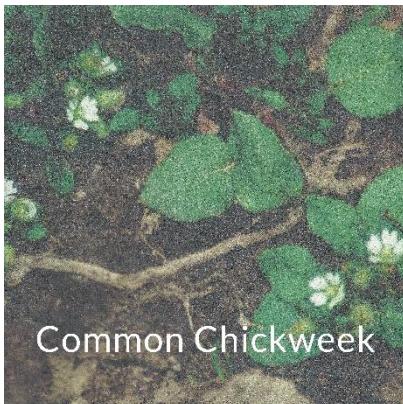
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Before Mark Baldwin sailed happily across the wide Atlantic, he gave talks at the RTPI on Edible Wildflowers. I enjoyed the discoveries as well as the eating which followed. Yum! The thought of the aroma of batter frying in oil quickens me even as I type.

I confess, however, that all I really came away with (looking back now, years later) was a recipe for cattails and the Peterson Field Guide to “Edible Wild Plants.”

I've written a lot on wildflowers on the property and have added their medicinal qualities when I could but hadn't given that much thought to what I could be eating. Now, then . . .

To be candid, I expected this Musing to be about a few favorites with detailed recipes. The Guide doesn't work that way. So here are a bunch of my favorite wildflowers and suggestions for enjoying them in ways other than a vase.



Common Chickweed

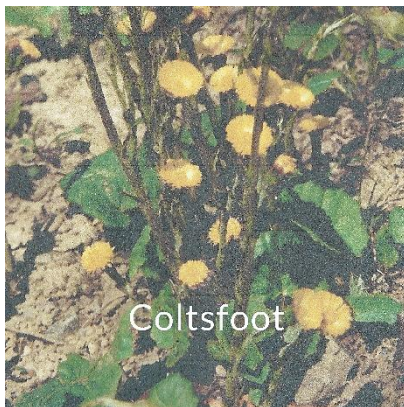
Amaranths. The tender leaves can be boiled for 10-15 mins., or added to salad. The tiny black seeds make a nutritious flour.

Arrowheads (aka Duck-potatoes): The tubers can be gathered in quantity by freeing them from the mud with a hoe or rake and collecting them as they float to the water's surface. Although slightly unpleasant-tasting eaten raw, the tubers are delicious when cooked; prepare them as you would potatoes.

Chickweeds: The tender leaves and stems can be added to salads, but are best boiled for 5 min. and served as greens.

Cheavers (aka Goosegrass): The tender young shoots are excellent boiled for 10-15 min. and served with butter; cooked shoots can be chilled and added to salads. Slow-roasted until dark brown, and ground, the ripe fruit make an outstanding coffee substitute.

Hop Clover: The young leaves (before flowers appear) can be added to salads or boiled for 5 min. The pealike seeds can be used to flavor soups and stews. The crushed dried leaves can be used as a vanilla-like flavoring for pastries. A good source of protein.



Coltsfoot

Coltsfoot: An excellent cough syrup or hard candy (cough drop) can be made by boiling the fresh leaves and adding sugar to the resultant extract. When making hard candy, add 2 cups of sugar for every cup of extract and

boil until the rich syrup forms a hard ball when dropped in cold water. The dried leaves can be steeped to make a fragrant tea, or burned and the residue used as a saltlike seasoning.

Ox-eye Daisy: The tender young leaves (lighter green) make an interesting addition to salads.

Day-lily: A little-known but excellent food source. Add the early shoots to salads or prepare like asparagus. Prepare the young flower buds like green beans or, when older, like fritters. Use the fresh flowers to make fritters, or the fresh, withered or dried flowers to season stews. Add crisp snow-white tubers found early in the year to salads, or prepare like corn. Older, but still firm, tubers can also be prepared like corn.

Galinsoga: Excellent boiled for 10-15 min. and served with butter or vinegar.

Horseradish: The source of commercial horseradish. Mix the grated roots with a little vinegar. Add the tender young leaves to salads.

Japanese Knotweed: The young shoots – up to 1 ft. – are excellent steamed or boiled for 4-5 min. and served like asparagus; if the flavor is too tart, add a little sugar. Slightly older stems can be peeled and the sour rind boiled with sugar and pectin to make a rhubarblike jam.

Lady's Thumb: The young leaves make an acceptable wild spinach when boiled for 5-10 min. and served with vinegar; raw, they can be added to salads.

Sedum, live-forever: The young leaves can be added to salads or boiled for 5-10 min. The crisp tubers can either be boiled for 20 min. and served with butter or pickled in seasoned vinegar.

Musk Mallow: The tender young leaves can be used okra-like to thicken soups and stews, or they can be boiled for 10-15 min. and served with butter. The tender green fruit of cheeses are a pleasant nibble or addition to salads.

I used to argue with a friend whether or not “cheese” (Swiss, cheddar) could be cheeses or not. Cheeses in this case is a plant.

Written October 8, 2021

