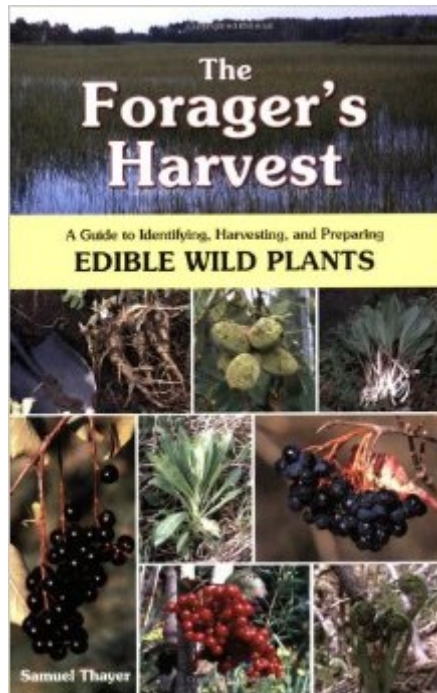


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# The Forager's Harvest: A Guide To Identifying, Harvesting, And Preparing Edible Wild Plants



## Synopsis

A guide to 32 of the best and most common edible wild plants in North America, with detailed information on how to identify them, where they are found, how and when they are harvested, which parts are used, how they are prepared, as well as their culinary use, ecology, conservation, and cultural history.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (515 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

I am a botanist and I'm in love with this book. Admittedly, it treats only a few dozen plants, but each is described in detail, with methods of distinguishing it in the field from similar species, harvesting, and preparing it. Numerous color photos are very useful. There are good general discussions of plant identification, harvesting, and preservation. The author complains about previous edible plant references, which exhaustively list hundreds of plants but give inadequate information on each, and frequently recycle information from previous literature, allowing misinformation to creep in (an undeniable problem). Thayer proposes that writers on edible plants should provide only information from their own experience or else specifically referenced information, a praiseworthy code of conduct and one that really makes this book shine. When he gives you detailed instructions for when and how to gather and prepare a plant, you know that he's actually done it himself and it worked. I like his standards for the plants as well: Food should taste good! If it doesn't taste good, he says, don't eat it! So, while other books provide long lists of "survival foods" that would gag a goat, Thayer discusses only the plants that he actually enjoys eating. He tells you what sort of quality to expect in the final products, and whether they will be worth the work you put into them.

The only volume I can recall seeing of remotely similar quality was Steve Brill's book, which dealt with a different set of plants (emphasizing the common "weedy" species that Thayer is not particularly interested in), so if you already have Brill, you can buy this too. Otherwise, if you want to start learning to use edible wild plants, start with this volume.

I have 3 books on wild food foraging, including Angier's *Wild Edibles* and Gibbons *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*. Both those books are very good for plant details except they rely on hand drawn depictions for the plants, which it makes them close to useless for accurate identification. *Forager's Harvest* is the BEST book of the three for getting a beginner started. Lots and lots of nice color photographs of the plants. When choosing a book in getting started in foraging, you must have color photographs, there is no substitute. *Forager's Harvest*, unlike Gibbons and Angier books, does not overwhelm the reader with large numbers of edible plants, choosing to focus on a lower but still fairly good number of readily found and easily identified plants for foraging. This increases the reader confidence and starts them off gradually. If you are starting out in foraging, this is the book you should get. If you are botanist and have no problems identifying plants then Gibbons or Angier books might suit you better. As I am a beginner, I can say that of the three books, *Forager's Harvest* is the book that I will be using in my plant foraging expeditions. I wish I had gotten this book first.

I'm giving this book a three-star review as a compromise between its usefulness to me as a Californian (which would result in one star) and what I perceive to be its usefulness to people in the eastern US (which could very easily be five stars). The book's regional orientation should be more clearly disclosed. It can't be detected from the title, front cover, or back cover. Here on Amazon, it can't be detected from the product description. For someone buying the book on Amazon, the only way to tell that the book is regionally specific is either (a) to use the Look Inside feature and stumble across p. 4, or (b) to sift through the large number of reviews and find the few that point this out. This book does describe a small number of species that are useful food sources in California, but the vast majority of the ones described do not grow here, and it omits some of the most useful species that do grow plentifully here, such as miner's lettuce and wild onions. I wouldn't have any problem with this if the title of the book was "*The Forager's Harvest: Wild Food East of the Rockies*," or if the product description mentioned that it was so regionally specific. The author's defensive reaction to Dale Adkison's review is that the book can't be all things to all people. That's valid, but people like me are wasting money on this book because there is no easy way to tell that it's specific to one region.

This book offers an excellent introduction to the practice of wild plant harvesting. Not only are the plants discussed (in great detail), but the author includes many personal experiences and additional information (the first 75 pages - timing, storage, etc.) - including recommendations on further book resources. The descriptions of the two dozen or so plants are extensive. The book gives information on ID, range, harvesting, and preparation. I live in Washington State, though, and I have only found about 11 of the plant species readily available here (Choke Cherry, Wapato, Butternut(in urban settings), Black Locust, Cattail, Stinging Nettle, Serviceberry, Sumac (Staghorn), Linden (urban ornamental), Burdock, and Thistle). The book is still a wealth of information and a very valuable resource.

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