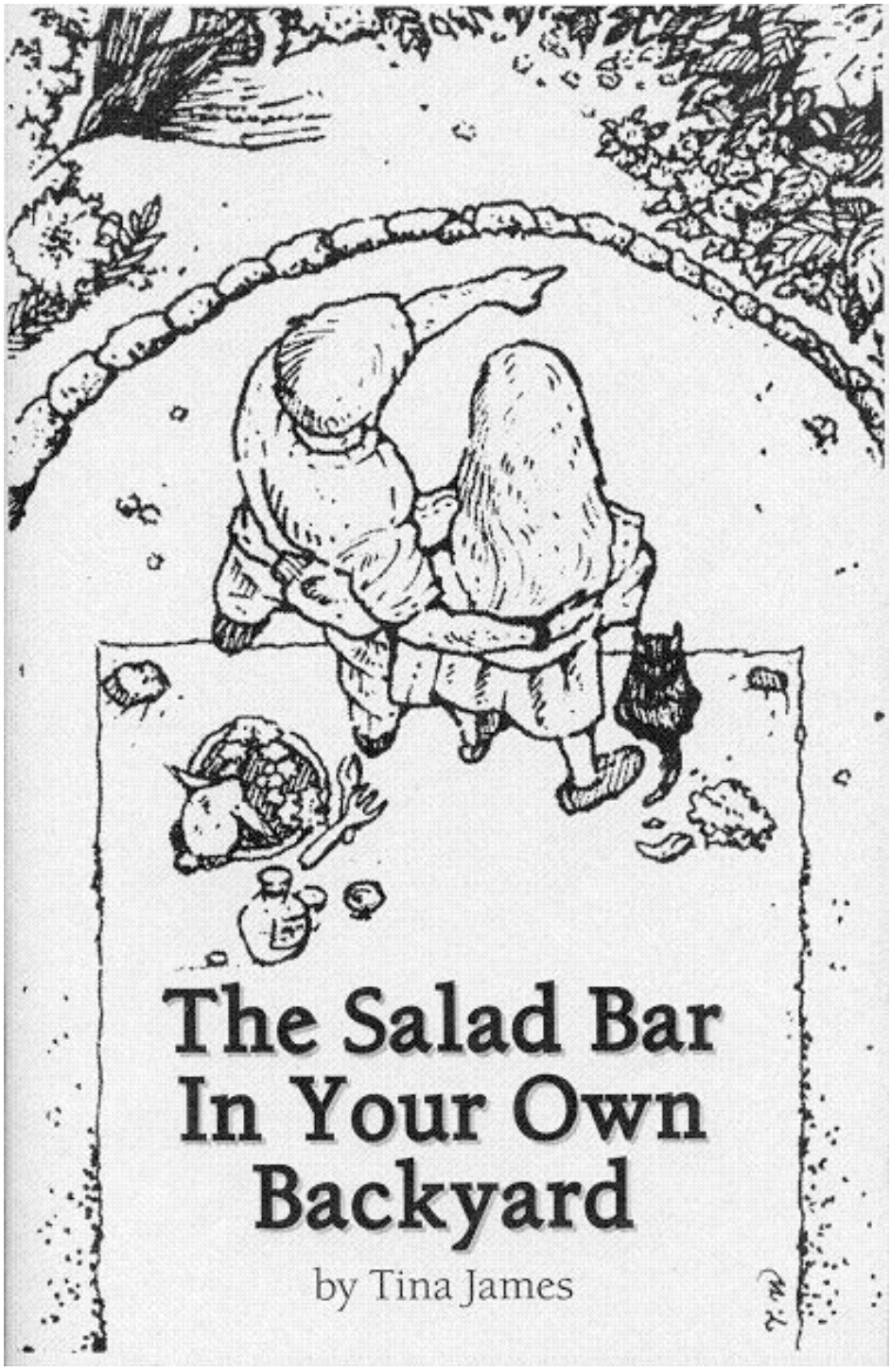


# The Salad Bar In Your Own Backyard

by Tina James

# The Salad Bar In Your Own Backyard

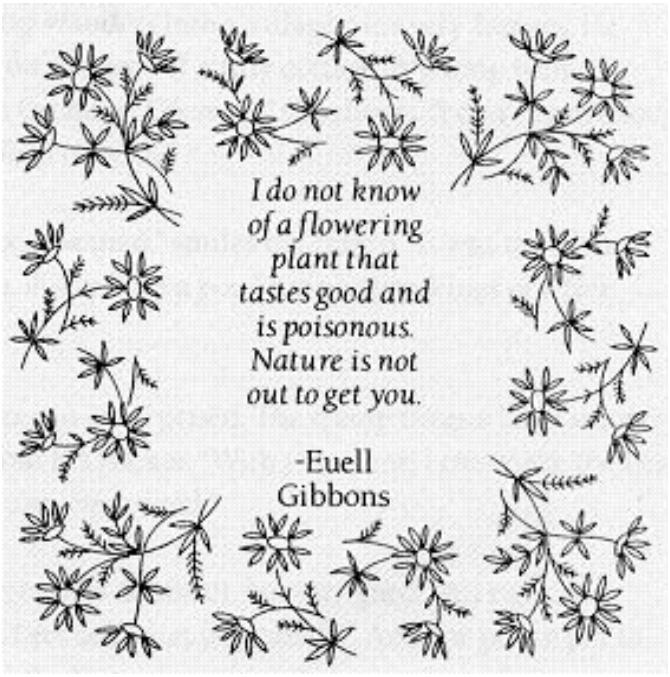
by Tina James

This little book is dedicated to George, who has generously extended his palette in devotion to the wild and weedy ways of his wife.

Cover art: Tom Wiley
Digital publishing: BareBones Design


www.TinaBeneman.com

Second Edition
Updated online April, 2017


I do not know
of a flowering
plant that
tastes good and
is poisonous.
Nature is not
out to get you.
-Euell
Gibbons

# Stone Soup

Do you know the folk tale called Stone Soup? Just in case, I'll retell the story briefly since it reveals the deeper wisdom of **The Salad Bar in Your Own Backyard**.

A tramp wanders into a village. He's very hungry. He knocks on the door of a tidy cottage. A plump woman answers the door. "Go away!" she shouts. "I don't have enough food to feed us both."

"Ah, good woman," smiles the tramp. "It was my plan to feed you. If you have a pot, I have the makings of a fine soup."

The woman is surprised. The tramp takes a large smooth stone from his pocket. "With this stone, I can make the best soup you've ever tasted."

The woman is doubtful, but intrigued. "All right, Mr. Wizard. Let's see what you can do." And she puts a pot to boil over the fire.

When the pot comes to a boil, the tramp ceremoniously drops in the stone. Kerplop! He stirs the pot carefully. As he stirs, he tells the woman of his travels, the many wonders he has seen. Sunrise over tall mountains, sunsets spreading over the sea. She has almost forgotten the soup.

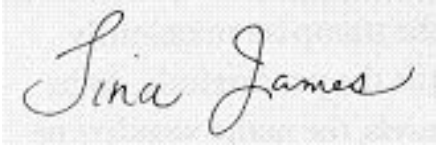
The tramp continues to stir and spin stories, stopping now and then to savor the steaming pot with great relish. Finally the woman says, "I just remembered. 1 have a few old potatoes in the cellar. We could add them to this soup."

"Ah," said the tramp. "That will make this fine soup even better." And he continues to stir and tell tales and she continues to share from her cupboards. Even though it's winter, she finds a few handfuls of chickweed to throw into the pot.

As they sit down to eat together, warmed inside and out, the woman exclaims: "Imagine! Such a fine soup from a stone."

Gathering from the **Salad Bar in Your Own Backyard** is much the same tale and it too has a happy ending. Starting with nothing but the weeds in your lawn, you can create nourishing food and you'll likely rouse the interest of your neighbors as well. If you go on to grow a few plants in pots, you'll have an even wider selection of tender ingredients. Filling the basket with dandelions, basil and nasturtium blossoms, you will also nourish a relationship with Life, one that provides food for the soul as well as the body.

A glorious pot of soup indeed!



Tina James
Candlemas, 1996

# CHAPTER 1

## Eat Your Weedies

What can you eat that grows in a crack in the sidewalk, provides more food value than Popeye's spinach and is free for the picking?

Weeds! That's right, *weeds*.

What is a weed? The word weed comes from the Anglo-Saxon *we'od*, once a general name for all small plants. Eventually, the word herb came to distinguish plants considered useful whereas weeds are those which happen to get in our way.

Since it's we humans who make such determinations, designating one plant a weed and another an herb is clearly subjective. In fact, once upon a time, every thing was a weed. Prickly lettuce (*Lactuca scariold*) is a precursor of garden lettuce, white-rooted Queen Anne's lace (*Daucus carota*) is the grandmother of orange carrots and rambling wild roses the ancestors of petite hybrid teas. Weeds are truly wildings, plants that never crossed the genetic doorway of domestication.

For whatever reason, the domestication process seems to steal something vital. Most of us have noticed that hybrid flowers lack the fragrance of old-fashioned blooms. And weeds are far more nutritious than cultivated plants.

Why did people stop eating weeds? Probably for the same reason brown bread went out of fashion. The whole grain is a little harder to chew and besides, only peasants ate coarser loaves. They couldn't afford the soft "bought-en" kind. Most food choices have unconscious roots, and as any Dr. Lucy can tell you, they're not rational, (five cents please!) Some weeds are stronger flavored than more common salad ingredients, especially if compared to watery iceberg lettuce. The culinary wheel is turning, however, and sharp greens like arugula and chicory are back in vogue. As forgotten flavors reclaim an honored place at the table, ancient food preferences will make a comeback.

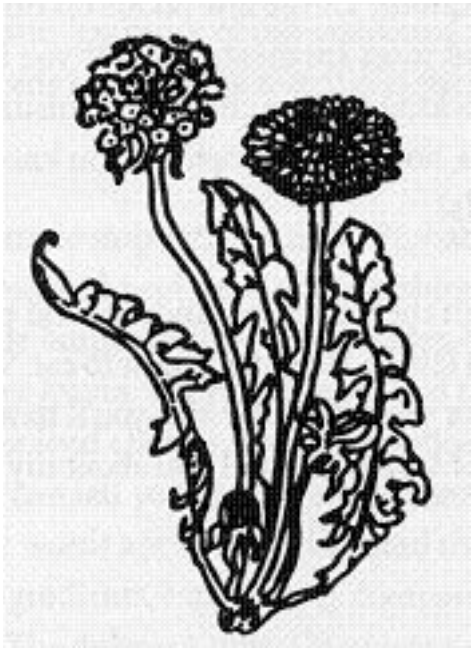
Many folks already know that weeds are tasty, nutritious and free but are still reluctant to gobble dandelions out of their yards. What's the hesitation?

Fear is the most obvious reason we're anxious about eating weeds. We're afraid to pick the wrong thing and poison ourselves and our families. Most of us did not grow up gamboling through the meadows with an elder who pointed out: this we eat, this we don't. Even if we're pretty sure about dandelions, there can be a lot of variation among plants. Could we make a deadly mistake?

Well, set your heart to rest. The vast majority of plants aren't poisonous. Of the few plants on this continent that are

toxic, most are mushrooms. Leave mushrooms off your picking list and the chances of mishap are very unlikely. After all, how many people do you know who died from eating weeds?

Besides, although there are thousands of wild plants, you need only learn a few, i.e. those you want to eat. Select just five wild plants for your salad bar and you'll have plenty of great pickings. For starters, I'll tell you about my favorites.



Common dandelion
*Taxacum officinale*

Dandelions evoke vivid memories. Who hasn't peeled open the hollow stalk and tasted the bitter milky sap or blown the puffy seedpods to count how many children one will have? Even lawn maniacs often spare a smile for the first sun-yellow blossoms, eagerly besieged by bees.

Dandelions are incredibly nutritious (higher on the USDA's list than any cultivated plant except collards!) and they have other remarkable health benefits as well. They are higher in beta-carotene than carrots plus they serve big helpings of vitamins Bl, B2, B5, B6, B12, C, E P and D,

biotin, inositol, potassium, phosphorus, magnesium and zinc. Dandelions were once revered for their medicinal properties as well. The word *officinale* in the Latin name means that the plant was an "official" remedy in the apothecary trade.

To identify dandelions, look for long (three-to-twelve inch) jagged leaves (dandelion is French for *dent de lion*, meaning "lion's tooth"), a hollow flower stalk which exudes a milky sap and yellow blossoms consisting of hundreds of tiny ray flowers. The leaves grow in a rosette, which means they all emerge from the ground at a common point. When the plants go to seed, they form a round head of winged seeds.

Those airborne seeds sow dandelions far and wide, so you can find this adaptable plant almost anywhere. Moist meadows are ideal places to forage for leaves, flowers and roots but you can probably find a daily supply in your own lawn and garden beds or any place where the soil has been disturbed.

Don't think you're seeing things if you find many small variations within the species. Congratulations! You're a good observer. There are hundreds of types of dandelions, although most distinctions are apparent only to botanists. Happily, there's no need to worry about picking from the wrong plants as dandelions have no poisonous look-alikes.

All parts of the dandelion are edible. The leaves are most tender when gathered in the spring before they flower. Look for them again in the fall after frost. The best way to harvest

is to cut the greens with the top of the root still attached. This keeps the leaves together which makes them easier to handle. I use sharp scissors, pushing the point underneath the soil just enough to cut through the top of the root. If you're gathering large quantities, a sharp hoe speeds the task. Shake off any surface dirt as you work.

Once in the kitchen, rinse the greens under running water. Snip the leaves finely with scissors or mince with a chef's knife just as you would prepare parsley. For starters, one tablespoon per person is a safe amount to add. Most people won't notice the taste and the cook can feel wonderfully righteous for providing such a powerhouse of nutrients.

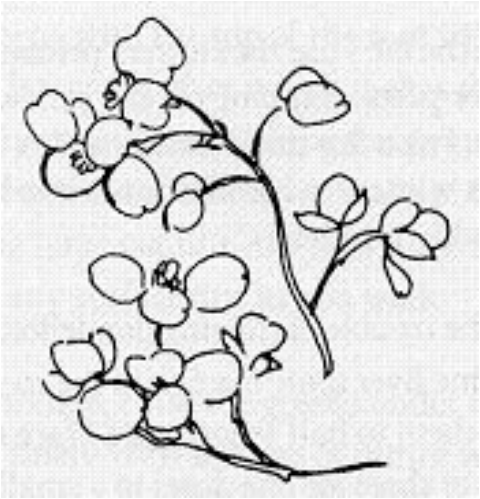
Use fresh dandelion greens raw in salads every day when they are in season. The greens once washed and dried will keep in the refrigerator for a least a week. Although dandelions are enjoyable raw, it's easier to consume your "minimum daily requirement" of dandelions if cooked. See the recipe section for a few of my favorites.

While you're out picking dandelion greens, don't overlook the flower buds and the yellow flower blossoms. The buds or "knobs" grow close to the ground and are best picked when they are tightly closed. They have a mild nutty taste and are a great addition to stir fry, omelets, casseroles or soup. Keeping the buds picked off also increases leaf production.

Dandelion flowers are tasty fried in batter or tempura if you can afford the fat. For a special treat, try dandy burgers,

a tasty low cost contender for crab cakes! (Recipes at the end of the book.) I also dry the flower heads to make a golden massage oil that eases sore muscles. Dandelion blossoms are reputed to "gladden the heart."

If you go to the trouble of digging dandelions out by their roots, make some liver tonic tea. Scrub the roots carefully and then slice them in half lengthwise. Place the roots (you need only two or three for one dose) in a small pan and cover with boiling water. Simmer for twenty minutes. Strain and drink. If you'd like to try dandelion root coffee, see Peter Gail's book, **The Dandelion Celebration** for complete instructions.



Common chickweed
*Stellaria media*

Chickweed is reputed to be the most common plant in the entire world. It grows all year long, a remarkable feat for such a delicate and watery plant. As a salute to chickweed's tenacity, I am at this moment drinking fresh chickweed tea. The date is February 15 and it's snowing. Indeed, this has been one of the coldest winters of the century here in Maryland. Every time the snow recedes, there's a green carpet of chickweed hugging many of my garden beds.

No doubt tidy gardeners are aghast that chickweed is given free rein in my vegetable beds, but I consider it a self-sown cover crop. In large areas where summer transplants will be set in, chickweed keeps the soil moist and mellow. Simply dig through the green mat to plant tomatoes and peppers. When hot weather comes, chickweed poops out. I lay down newspapers and cover them with straw or grass

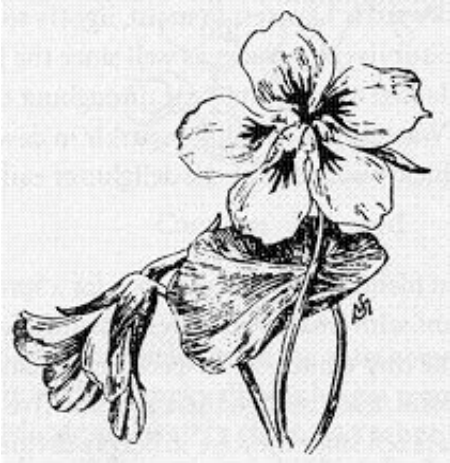
clippings as mulch for the rest of the season. Come fall, there's another fine crop of chickweed to blanket the garden over the winter. Please note that chickweed is not a good ground cover for salad greens like lettuce as there is too much competition for the same nutrients and growing space.

Although chickweed is happiest in moist, lightly shaded areas, it survives dry places as well since the leaves are especially adapted to conduct water throughout the layers of the plant. Watching the sunlight sparkle in dew-studded carpets of chickweed is one of the delights of early morning walks.

If you've not yet identified chickweed, look for a sprawling spring-green plant with small oval leaves growing along stringy stems. The tiny white star-shaped flowers bloom at the ends of the plant. Even though there are only five petals, it appears there are ten since they are so deeply divided. Chickweed is actually related to the carnation family which is apparent if you look at the flowers under magnification.

Chickweed is a very mild-flavored plant. My description is that it tastes "green." The greens are easiest to harvest with scissors. Just clip the stems above the soil line. Cut the greens in small snips with scissors or chop them with a knife. Toss a few handfuls into the salad bowl and throw a few cups into soup stock as well. Feel free to use generous amounts since there's no bitter taste to conceal. Some folks blanch chickweed and use it like spinach or chard but I much prefer lamb's quarters for this purpose.

Chickweed is mildly diuretic and very nutritious, providing plenty of vitamins B6, B12, C and D as well as rutin, biotin, choline, inositol, PABA and beta-carotene. Chickweed also contains lots of minerals, including magnesium, iron, calcium, potassium, zinc, phosphorus, manganese, sodium, copper and silicon.



Common Violet
*Viola papilionacea*

One of my favorite spring sights is a hill carpeted with violets, which like roses, are so well known that the name designates a color. There are several hundred species of violets but the most common in North America is *papilionacea*, referring to the "butterfly" shape of the petals. Thanks to Napoleon Bonaparte, the French have had a long love affair with violets. *Le Pere Violet* gave violets to Josephine on her wedding day and every anniversary thereafter. When Napoleon died, dried violets were found in his locket. Not surprisingly violets became all the rage throughout France and many varieties were developed,

including the larger-flowered pansies. The word "pansy" comes from *pensee*, or "thought," a herald to romantic anniversary sentiments.

The violets Napoleon gathered were actually *Viola odorata*, a sweet-smelling species common Europe. Our native "butterflies" have no perceivable smell, a bafflement to me until I realized those old English herbals were referring to a different species.

Violets grow happily in the rich soil of moist meadows, damp woods, lawns and garden beds. Rosettes of deep green heart-shaped leaves appear in early spring and persist until hard frost. The whole plant grows only three-to-eight inches tall. Gnarled rhizomes grow underground and spread quickly in favored sites. The flowers have five petals with distinct "honey lines" or "whiskers." These bold markings direct bees to the nectar – you might call them landing pads! Examine a violet flower closely and you will notice that something is missing. In fact, the showy springtime blossoms are sterile. The fertile flowers are brown and appear later in the season, growing inconspicuously at ground level.

Violet leaves are a pleasant salad green. The leaves are mild with a bit of a peppery afterbite. They are also slightly gummy and can be used as a thickening agent in soups. I rarely use large amounts of cooked violet greens but a few chopped leaves are a staple in spring salads. Harvest the leaves with scissors, clipping them off at the soil line. Cut off the long stems before mincing the leaves for salad or soup.

Violet leaves are incredibly nutritious. They have five times more Vitamin C per 100 grams than an equivalent weight of oranges and two- and-a-half times more vitamin A than spinach. They also contain many important minerals.

Although not nearly as nutritious, violet flowers are edible and taste sweet. They are lovely tossed into vegetable, pasta or fruit salads and make a beautiful garnish as well. For a festive splash, sprinkle them on cake and ice cream. They can also be frozen into ice cubes or ice molds. Old-fashioned cookbooks give many recipes for crystallized violets. Most recipes advise dipping the blossoms in beaten egg white and then coating them with layers of superfine sugar. Violet flower syrup is an old remedy for sore throats.

All violets, including pansies, are edible. A small note of caution when preparing violets. Don't eat the roots. They do have medicinal value but without proper instruction, their use might cause you might throw up. In addition, note that African violets are not true violets; that's just a common name. Don't eat these houseplants either.

Lamb's quarters
*Chenopodium album*

Although it grows practically anywhere, lamb's quarters often go unnoticed since the flowers are inconspicuous. Vegetable gardeners pull out buckets of seedlings during late spring weeding frenzies without ever paying them any mind. Lamb's quarters won't win votes in a beauty contest, but the cooked greens are so tasty you'll be glad to make their acquaintance.

Look for lamb's quarters in unkempt lots, overgrown fields, urban parks and along country roads. It's one of those opportunistic plants that seeds in disturbed soil. You won't find large quantities of this annual sun-loving weed in large quantities in an established meadow. My vegetable garden has a fine supply of lamb's quarters and they remain within bounds with little effort.

The seedlings start popping up when the soil has warmed and frost is unlikely. In fact, I use lamb's quarters as an indicator plant for timing the first planting of corn. To identify lamb's quarters, look for foam-green leaves with long stems growing alternately along the grooved plant stalk. Some leaves have a reddish tinge. "Goosefoot," one of the plant's common names, suggests that the leaves are shaped like the bird's footprint.

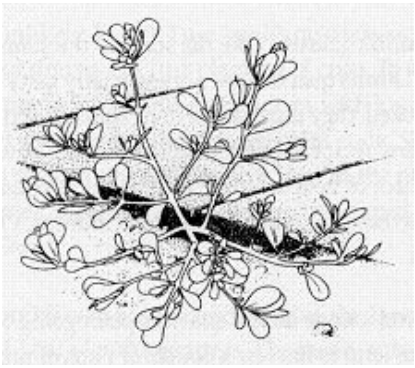
A sure identifier is to feel the underside of the leaves. Does it feel mealy? That's lamb's quarters. The mealy substance is a natural leaf protectant that is less pronounced on older plants. Lamb's quarters grow very quickly, branching out almost like trees. Average height is three-to-five feet, but in fertile garden soil they can hit ten feet with a sturdy trunk almost impervious to heavy duty garden loppers. Clearly, this is a weed you don't want to allow free rein, especially considering that one plant can make 75,000 tiny seeds!

Not to worry. Once you identify and taste lamb's quarters, they won't take over your garden because you'll eat them as fast as they grow. To harvest lamb's quarters, find a stand of seedlings three-to-five inches tall. Use scissors to clip off the tender tops. Gather three times as many greens as you think you need because the leaves cook down like spinach. In fact, lamb's quarters is closely related to spinach and beets. Once the plants get larger, start harvesting the leaves from the more tender side shoots. That way it's possible to harvest from more mature plants. Once washed and dried, the greens will keep for five days in the refrigerator.

With dandelions as the nutrition powerhouse crop for spring, lamb's quarters take the stage in the summer months. Lamb's quarters are not especially tasty raw but when cooked, they taste better than spinach and can be used in any recipe as such. Lamb's quarters' leaves are a super source of beta carotene, calcium, potassium and iron as well as trace minerals, B-complex vitamins, Vitamin C and fiber.

If you find a huge lamb's quarters plant going to seed, it won't take long to harvest a couple of cups of protein-rich seeds. Put the seed heads and your hands in a large brown bag and knead the seeds off. The seeds are very tasty added to pancake or muffin batter.

What about the name, lamb's quarters? It's not known for sure but there are two stories. In one, the diamond-shaped mature leaf is said to look like a cut of lamb. Another version refers to an ancient earth festival called Lammas Quarter which takes place in early August as the power of the sun settles into the earth and the crops begin to ripen. This is also the time when lamb's quarters puts out its crumbly green blooms so perhaps the two events came to be associated.



Purslane
*Portulaca oleracea*

Like many country folk, my grandfather called purslane "pursley," but I don't remember eating it until I became interested in wild plants. Purslane was common table fare in Europe until the twentieth century. The Latin word *oleracea* meaning cultivated vegetable or potherb attests to its familiarity. The smooth succulent stems (they remind me of the houseplants called jade plants) are now reappearing in farmers' markets and gourmet salad blends.

If you grow annual flowers, you may know the sun-loving Mexican roses, *Portulaca grandiflora*. Use this resemblance to identify the fleshier-stemmed potherb which has small yellow flowers in late summer. Purslane is a smooth annual plant which trails along the ground. It produces many thick, succulent stems with a reddish tint. The shiny green leaves are toothless, smooth and fleshy and range in size from one-half-to-two inches. Purslane is one of the last weeds to pop up in my garden. It waits until the soil has fully warmed, telling me it's time to plant lima beans, and it's flattened by the first frost.

Purslane is another weed that can be put to good use as a cover crop. Ideally, it germinates in among the tomatoes or corn rows where it serves as a glistening water-retentive mulch.

To harvest the greens for salad, use scissors and clip off the stalks at the soil line when they are small. If the plants are long and stringy, just use the tops. I don't wash purslane until I'm ready to use it. The greens will keep in the refrigerator for at least a week.

Purslane is very refreshing raw. It has a green lemony taste with no hint of bitterness. I like to munch on it when I'm working in the garden. You'll find it's very cooling and thirst quenching — and you won't have to stop to pee as often! Chopped purslane is great in the summer salad bowl and the lemony flavor is wonderful in tuna fish or chicken salad as well. Like all the weeds we've discussed, purslane is high in many essential nutrients, including Vitamin C, iron, beta-carotene, calcium, phosphorus and riboflavin. It's also exceptionally high in omega-3 fatty acids, which is rare in land plants, and it tastes far better than fish oil.

It's fine to add purslane to soups although I rarely think to cook it. Since the thick stems don't dry or freeze well, I preserve it by pickling. Simply place clean pieces of purslane in a large jar, add a handful of peppercorns and a few sliced cloves of garlic. Then cover the greens with rice or white wine vinegar and refrigerate.

## Help with Identifying Weeds

If you're not familiar with the weeds covered in this booklet, don't take a guess. Here are some ways to establish positive identification.

1. Ask a knowledgeable person to look at a sample you've picked and make a pronouncement. If no one you know personally can help, seek an expert. Likely places to consult include the Cooperative Extension Service, arboretums, botanical gardens, parks, schools, colleges and garden centers with professional personnel.

2. Study a reference book and take a calculated risk. Even if you feel 99.99% certain that you're correct, take a very small bite at first. If a leaf tastes bad, stop!

3. Buy some weed seeds and see how they grow. As weeds have become trendy, some seed companies now include weeds in their listings. Many sources offer a more refined variety, such as a larger leafed purslane or a cultivated French dandelion. If you live in the city where foraging isn't as easy, you can create a weed garden from seed. (See the seed sources listed in the back.)

Once you know what a dandelion looks like, it's like riding a bike. You won't forget. After the initial learning period, spotting edible weeds in the lawn is as easy as pointing to an apple.

## Safe Foraging Tips

Although most of the weeds I eat are picked from my own lawn and garden, grazing through wild places, whether they be in the city, suburbs or countryside, is a favorite seasonal pastime. Besides the pleasure of being outdoors and discovering new territory, it gives me an almost licentious thrill to fill my basket with food I didn't pay for or sweat over.

Foraging is lots of fun. I don't want to mess it up with a lot of rules. But for safety's sake, keep the following in mind.

1. Avoid harvesting along heavily trafficked roadways. In addition to the danger of speeding cars, lots of grit and pollution settle on the plants.

2. Do not harvest in areas where crops or lawns may have been sprayed with herbicides or pesticides.

3. Respect other people's property. Ask permission before weeding other people's lawns.

Many people ask me how to tell if an area has been sprayed with chemicals. There is no foolproof indication but if you don't see any weeds, that's a good clue. Even though it's unsafe to harvest from freshly sprayed lawns, most chemicals are water soluble and wash off after the first rain, unfortunately into the water everybody drinks. Thereafter, there's very little toxic matter in plant leaves since plants, unlike animals, do not readily absorb and store toxins in their tissues. This is one of the reasons a plant-based diet is so health-giving.

One last caveat. None of the weeds discussed in this book are endangered in any way. (I'm not counting species of violets other than common ones.) Don't forget, however, that it's illegal to pick any type of plant in many public parks.

## Wild Weedy and Wonderful

After learning more, I hope the only way you'll ever consider "rounding up" weeds is for the table, the medicine chest or the compost pile. Without a scrap of sunny garden space or even the desire to create one, you can harvest lots of nutritious food without ever sowing a seed. In fact, once I've planted my garden and struggle to defend it from insects and deer, I notice how well weeds grow with no help from me. Is there a cosmic message here? Perhaps it's just the perversity of human nature to desire that which is harder to reach!

# CHAPTER 2

## Puttering with Plants ‘N’ Pots

The next stage in our simmering pot of stone soup is plants grown in pots. Container gardens are easy to set up and most people can find the time and space to manage a few pots on the deck or patio. Container growing is great for salad greens in the cooler ends of the season and terrific for herbs all season long.

The essential requirements for outdoor containers are that they hold enough soil to support plant growth and provide drainage. For greatest ease, choose the largest size of containers possible. Big containers will hold more water and more soil and thus dry out less quickly. Keeping containers well watered when the season turns hot and dry is the only serious challenge to success.

### The Best Materials for Containers

Wood is the ideal material for outdoor containers. Wood "breathes" which minimizes soil overheating, yet it doesn't

allow the soil to dry out as quickly as materials like clay. Granted, large wooden containers are expensive if you have to buy them. If there's no one handy with a hammer and saw to tack together a few boxes, look for wooden half-barrels, a by-product of whiskey or wine-making.

Barrels are relatively inexpensive for their size and last for at least five years. To provide good drainage, be certain to drill holes in the sides and the bottom of the barrel. When the wood expands, it becomes watertight and plants will drown.

A few other tips for growing in barrels. The first one is obvious, but (she admits sheepishly) I made this mistake once. Don't fill the barrel with soil until it's placed in a permanent position. If you have any thought of moving it again, attach heavy duty casters to the bottom. Also, shove a few bricks or pieces of wood underneath the barrel so it isn't resting directly on the ground or patio. This will increase resistance to rot.

Last, it's costly to fill a barrel with soil. You can get away with a lot less dirt. Fill the bottom third of the barrel with rocks, stones, styrofoam chips, or something unmentionable that will serve as good drainage. Then add the soil and you're ready to plant.

If you live on the twelfth floor of an apartment building, hauling a heavy half-barrel is a daunting task. Bushel baskets are a cheap, lightweight alternative. Every year, I buy a few used baskets from a crab house for $2 each. Produce stands are another place to check.

The trick to using a basket is to line it with plastic, such as a trash bag. Cut holes to make sure it will drain well. Once you've lined the basket, proceed just as for using barrels. It's especially important to set the basket on a piece of slate or bricks to retard rot. Incidentally, large decorative baskets make beautiful containers if you don't mind sacrificing them to the elements.

Basket containers will last one season for sure, maybe two, but the price is right. I call them "gardens-to-go" because they are so portable. Equipped with a basket, bags of potting soil and a few plants, you can create a garden anywhere. Gardens-to-go are a great gift for places like nursing homes and for anyone whose mobility is restricted.

## Other Container Possibilities

What about clay pots? Don't bother with small ones. Clay is so porous that it's impossible to keep the pots watered once the weather turns hot. Large (twelve-inch diameter and up) clay pots will work as long as you're prepared to water them every day. Terra cotta is a better material and is worth the investment if you like the look and plan to use them for a long time.

And plastic? Although plastic pots are the most available, they are last on my list. Plastic is impermeable, which means no air passes through. In hot weather, the soil in plastic pots literally cooks. If you go with plastic, pay a little more and buy the largest containers possible. You don't have to stick with plastics sold for containers. Laundry tubs toddler-sized swimming pools and storage containers

will work fine as long as you punch enough holes for drainage.

Speaking of novel containers, some of my favorites are roadside finds. Such rustic rejects as troughs, fruit boxes trunks, cauldrons, sandboxes and washtubs create delightful possibilities. Trash or treasure is a matter of personal taste.

## Soil for Pots

With containers assembled for planting a salad bar, soil is the next requirement. Digging up soil from the garden or even the woods is not a good idea. Container soil needs a lot of air so as to provide adequate drainage. Unless your soil is from heaven, you'll find it turns into a solid mass after a heavy rain.

The most expensive option is to fill up containers with a good quality potting soil mix. A cheaper and better solution is to buy potting soil and stretch it with some additional materials. I use half potting soil (Pro-Mix, Peter's, Bacto and Fafard are several good brands) and then add sand and compost. The formula is two parts potting soil, one part sand, one part compost. If you don't have compost, use leaf mold or bagged humus. I also add a one-quarter cup of a dry organic fertilizer (such as Erth-Rite) and one-quarter cup of lime for every gallon of mix as well.

It takes a lot of soil mix to fill up large containers the first time, even if you hide some debris in the bottom. Fortunately, the soil can be renewed each season. When the growing season ends, mulch large containers that will

remain outdoors with shredded leaves. (To ward against breakage, it's best to put expensive clay pots under cover.) Come spring, the leaves will have decomposed into leaf mold. Add more fertilizer and lime and a half-gallon of compost and the pots are ready for replanting.

## Watering Wisdom

Once pots are prepared, it's a delight to plant and tend the contained garden. You can dig in the soil with a spoon and weeding is a breeze. Also, because conditions are more controlled, outdoor containers rarely suffer from insects and disease. The only challenge is supplying enough water.

The optimum solution for watering containers is to invest in an automatic watering system that allows for placement of spigots in individual pots. This equipment is not prohibitively expensive but it does restrict you to grouping the containers in one or two areas.

Mulching containers with an organic mulch will help retain moisture. Shredded leaves, chopped straw or dried grass clippings are far preferable to wood mulch, which is highly acidic. Another way to retain water is to place large saucers under pots. Other than that, you're pretty much stuck with a daily waltz with the hose. If possible, water early or late in the day so that moisture can be absorbed more fully. Take the time to water slowly so that the water penetrates fully.

## Foliar Feeding

Foliar feeding is a technique that makes the difference between ho-hum container plants and those that sing! Container plants need more food than garden plants because every time you water, nutrients leach out. Add nutrient loss to constant heat stress and before long, plants look stressed. Feeding the plants through their leaves is more efficient than feeding them through their roots as leaves absorb nutrients eight to twenty times faster through their leaves.

Foliar feeding requires the purchase of a pressurized sprayer, the type commonly sold for (horrors!) spraying chemicals. A gallon sprayer costs about $30. Seaweed is the best organic fertilizer for foliar feeding. It contains all the nutrients found in the sea and enough nitrogen to feed plants without pushing them. If you can't find seaweed in your garden center, make your interest known. It comes in liquid form or as powder which is rehydrated. (Mail order sources are listed in the back.)

The formula for foliar feeding is two-to-three tablespoons of liquid seaweed per gallon of water. Add a few drops of Basic H or biodegradable soap to make the water "wetter." Using the finest mist, spray the plants thoroughly, both the topsides and the undersides of the leaves. It's best to do this before the sun gets hot in the morning (by 10:00 a.m.) because plant pores are open, absorbing moisture in the form of dew. If early morning doesn't work for you, wait until dusk when dew forms again.

For best results, foliar feed container plants every three weeks. Seaweed helps plants manage all kinds of

temperature extremes and provides superb nutrients to boot. You'll be amazed at the results!

## Plants for the Contained Salad Bar

Now comes the fun part. Here are some suggestions for salad bar plants that adapt especially well to container growing.

### Spring and fall

**Salad greens:** lettuces, chard, mizuna, tatsoi. Red Giant mustard, mache, arugula, claytonia, cress

**Annual herbs:** parsley, onion chives, garlic chives, chervil, cilantro, marjoram, rosemary

**Perennial herbs:** sage, thyme, oregano, bronze fennel, tarragon, sorrel

**Edible flowers:** violets, violas, pansies, calendulas, dianthus, snapdragons, vegetable blossoms (e.g. pea, radish and all the greens), herb blossoms (e.g. onion chives, parsley, thyme, oregano, rosemary, sage, chervil and cilantro)

**Vegetables:** dwarf sugar snap peas, dwarf snow peas, radishes, baby carrots, garlic, scallions, broccoli, cabbage, kohlrabi

**Weeds:** a little chickweed won't hurt!

## Summer

**Salad greens:** summer lettuces, chard, radicchio, purslane, lamb's quarters

**Annual herbs:** basils, savory, dill, borage

**Edible flowers:** nasturtiums, lemon gem marigolds, salvias, and herb blossoms like borage, thyme, lavender, marjoram and sage

**Vegetables:** filet beans, bush beans, cherry tomatoes, hot peppers

Be sure to search out vegetables bred especially for small spaces. In addition, if you equip your container with a trellis, you can also grow climbing plants such as scarlet runner beans, purple hyacinth beans and cucumbers.

## Something for the Shade

Alas for woodland dwellers, most salad bar plants do best in full sun. One nice thing about containers is that you can cheat a bit on the amount of sun needed since the soil will get warmer in pots than it does in the ground. My deck gets about six hours of sun and I can easily grow all of the plants listed above. If you have four-to-six hours of sun, experiment with some of the plants you like best. You might get away with a worthwhile crop.

If your growing area is very shady, tuberous rooted begonias, the showy kind with huge tropical looking flowers, make a stunning container planting. Believe it or not, the flowers are quite edible! I serve them whole on salads, breaking apart the blossoms impressively just before tossing the salad. The petals are crunchy and have a nice lemon bite.

In the shady herb category, try chervil, parsley, mint, burnet, borage and lemon balm. Remember, there's no need to go hungry. There's a whole sunny world out there where you can forage to your heart's content and then return home to dine under the trees.

# CHAPTER 3

## Sink into The Soil

The next phase of our simmering stone soup is to dig up a little dirt. Including garden beds in the recipe allows you to grow food in larger quantities. Once established, small garden beds are relatively easy to maintain and they aren't as difficult to keep watered.

If you have a yard, it's likely that foundation plantings are already established. You don't need to create a special vegetable garden to grow some salad. Salad greens, herbs, edible flowers and colorful vegetable plants are beautiful enough to plant in the front row. Just tuck plants in front of the shrubs or extend the bed enough to reach into the sun.

Try a border of red leafed lettuce mixed with blue-blotch pansies, parsley, cilantro and bright yellow calendulas for spring. In summer, replant with 'Royal Burgundy' bush beans, dill, opal basil and lemon gem marigolds. As cool weather approaches again, add ornamental cabbages and

kales and dianthus. For more suggestions, check the bibliography for books on edible landscaping.

If the soil in your planting area is poor, start with herbs. Owing to their affinity for the wild, herbs will grow practically anywhere with very little care. To grow the most succulent greens, amend the soil where the plants will grow with leaf mold, compost or bagged manure. If the soil is heavy and clay-like, mix in some potting soil or sand.

For small gardens, as well as contained gardens, it's easier to buy transplants instead of starting from seed. (Exceptions: Plants grown for their roots like radishes or carrots and plants with fragile taproots like dill.) A cloudy day with rain in the forecast is ideal for transplanting. Make sure the transplants are well watered before you start. Have ready a bucket of water into which seaweed fertilizer has been added at a rate of two-to-three tablespoons per gallon. (For leafy plants like lettuce that need a lot of nitrogen, use one tablespoon seaweed +two tablespoons fish emulsion.)

Using a trowel, dig a hole a little deeper and wider than the size of the root ball. Ease the transplant out of its container. Take a look at the root ball. If the roots are thickly matted, pull off the "mat" at the very bottom of the root ball in order to stimulate growth. Set the plant in the ground a little deeper than it was in the container. Fill the hole halfway with soil, add some water, then add enough soil to finish filling in the hole. Now water again. Once the water sinks in, push the soil firmly around the roots to make sure the plant is well anchored. Unless rains do the job, it's advisable to water transplants every day until they are well

established. This is crucial if the weather is hot and dry Once plants are up and growing, I foliar feed with seaweed every month to keep plants looking beautiful and to maximize yield.

## Serious Soil Busting

Once you're hooked on salad growing, those with sunny yards may be lured into digging up enough space to feed the neighborhood. Warning! That's what happened to me and the situation continues to mushroom. Allow me to give you some advice to which I pay no mind.

Start small. Stay small until you're sure you've made it through one growing season and can evaluate how much time you can realistically devote to planting, tending, harvesting and eating. A 100 square foot bed of well conditioned soil can provide a bounteous supply of salad makings, especially if you succession plant all season long.

There are many excellent books that cover soil preparation in detail (see bibliography). In this booklet, I'll simply suggest several less common methods aimed at getting good results with the least amount of heavy physical labor.

## Let Your Fingers Do the Walking...

I have never acquired a home that included the gift of good soil. After spending many backbreaking years creating

soil from leaves and grass clippings, I am ready to change tactics. The next time I'm going to "get it delivered."

Folks who can do arithmetic in their heads are already calculating how much those salad greens will cost, but fresh, untainted food cannot be compared to what is found on supermarket shelves. Before deciding that purchased soil is absolutely out of the question, do a little research.

First, figure out how many cubic feet of soil will be needed to create a growing area. One 3 foot by 8 foot growing bed is 24 square feet. Let's figure 6 inches (.5 feet) for a minimum depth. To calculate cubic yards, which is what the landscaping company wants to know, multiply 24 by .5 which makes 12 cubic feet, then divide that by 3 to come up with 4 cubic yards, in my neighborhood, 4 cubic yards of Leaf Gro, which is topsoil mixed with composted leaf mold, costs $120 delivered.

If you have more time and energy than money to spend on soil, scout out materials free (or cheap) for the hauling. Are there any farms in your area? Does anyone keep horses? If so, wonderful organic materials are manufactured every day. It takes time, effort and lots of buckets, boxes and plastic bags to dig up enough material, but remember, this is a one-time adventure—unless you expand the garden!

Sawdust is another good source of organic material. Lumberyards, cabinet-making shops and construction sites are good places to look for sawdust, and it's a lot easier to carry than stable manure.

Municipal composting operations are another great source of garden making ingredients. Cities and towns that collect "yard waste" often compost this material and make it available to citizens. This is a wonderful service and a much more creative way to use all those leaves and grass clippings than dumping them in the landfill. Perhaps you will be inspired to do some grassroots organizing to inspire a win-win program like this in your area.

Once you've got your hot hands on some organic materials, what's the best way to make a bed? Here's my advice.

Mark off the area. (I never garden in straight rows, by the way. Make the bed any shape you want, remembering that you need to reach all the plants without stepping on the soil.) Turn over the sod and lay it root side up so it won't resprout. Spread your hard won bounty over the sod. Now dig up an 8-inch swath of sod around the perimeter of your garden site. Turn that root side up over your bed. Dig out the perimeter around the bed as deeply as you can.

Wait a day or too until the roots of the exposed sod have completely dried out. Break up this material, then mix up all of the ingredients. Add lime and a balanced organic fertilizer mix (follow the rates on the package) and mix that up too.

That's it! You're ready to plant. Any compost or mulch you can supply as the years go on will be worth the effort. By sticking to a small area, it's not that difficult to develop a wonderful growing site for your salad bar.

## The "No-Haul-It" Approach

OK, you've got me cornered. Here's the absolute easiest way to plant a garden. Mark off the garden area. Gather a big stack of newspapers. Cover the area with newspapers, at least six pages thick. Soak the newspapers with the hose. Using a sharp trowel, dig through the newspaper and make a big enough hole for the transplants. Put the transplants in the ground, cover the roots with soil and water them. Cover the newspaper with mulch, preferably chopped leaves. (Sawdust is OK but avoid tan bark mulch. This coarser material is for shrubs, not more tender plants.)

Presto! You've created and mulched a garden that will remain virtually weed-free all season long.

This method works best in sandy soil. If you have a thick layer of sod, let it soften underneath the newspapers for a few weeks before putting in the transplants. With this method, cover the newspapers with mulch right away so the newspapers don't blow away. If you plan ahead, a bed prepared in this manner in the fall will be much easier to dig when spring comes.

As always, whatever organic materials you can add will improve plant growth. If possible, spread a layer of leaf mold, peat humus or compost on the ground before arranging the newspapers. You can even get away with using a mixture of shredded leaves and grass clippings with a few buckets of soil mixed in. If you improve the soil a little bit every year, you can create soil loose and loamy enough to grow carrots.

If you don't want to take time to improve the soil, grow herbs. They will forgive your haste and reward you with pungent leaves for a host of culinary delights as well as soothing teas and healing balms. The bibliography lists several good herb books.

## Please to the Table

From a few lawn weeds, our simmering pot of stone soup has been transformed into a cornucopia of green growing possibilities. Step right up and enjoy your slice of Life! Seasoned with love and reverence for the earth, our pots will overflow, nourishing us now and forever.

I entrust myself to Earth
Earth entrusts herself to me
I entrust myself to Spirit
Spirit entrusts itself to me.

And so it is.

# CHAPTER 4

## Information Please

### A Few Basic Recipes

The most important tip in cooking with weeds is to refrain from sharing your secrets. By that I mean, don't tell unadventurous eaters you're putting weeds in their food until after they've enjoyed the meal! In case of doubt, save the news for your last will and testament.

### Sauteed Dandelion Greens

Saute onions and garlic in olive oil for five minutes. Add dandelion greens and simmer for 5 to 10 minutes longer. Season the dish with lemon juice and lots of ground pepper. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese for a festive change.

## Dandy Burgers

2 cups freshly opened dandelion blossoms

1 cup cracker crumbs

¼ cup finely chopped onion

1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

½ cup ground sunflower seeds

2 tablespoons minced parsley

I egg, well beaten

Splash of Tabasco sauce

Salt, pepper and Old Bay seasoning to taste

To prepare blossoms, use scissors to snip the yellow fluff off the cap. (The cap and stem are bitter so avoid using.) Mix remaining ingredients then stir in flower fluff. Shape into patties. Fry in butter or oil until golden brown. Serve with cocktail sauce and lemon.

## Other Uses for Dandelions

- Sprinkle unbaked pizza crust with 3 cups coarsely chopped dandelion greens. Add roasted tomatoes, goat cheese and minced oil-cured black olives. Bake.
- Use blanched dandelion greens in place of spinach in your favorite quiche or casserole recipe. (To blanch greens, simply boil in a large pot of water for 1 minute and then drain and chill.)
- Use dandelion greens instead of collards or kale in hearty soups like Portuguese Kale Soup or Tuscan Bean Soup. Add wild greens during the last 20 minutes of cooking.

## Mineral-Rich Water

Place in a large glass jar: 1 cup fresh chickweed, 1 tablespoon chopped violet leaves, 1/3 cup fresh mint, 2 tablespoons dried alfalfa and 2 tablespoons dried oatstraw. Add 6 cups of boiling water. Let steep for 20 minutes. Strain, add 2 cups of cold water. Drink throughout the day.

## Perfect Salad

Harvest fresh greens in the morning as the dew is drying or in the evening before the dew settles heavily. Shake off any surface dirt as you're cutting. If heavy rains are predicted, try to harvest before the storm clouds roll in.

Once in the kitchen, rinse greens under cool running water. For crinkly leaves like spinach, make the water a little warmer. This causes the leaves to unfurl and release any grit from the folds. Allow the greens to dry in a colander for a few minutes, then give the basket a shake to knock out more water.

Perfectly dry greens are the key to a superior salad. For best results, use a salad spinner or put into a clean pillow case. If you're using the pillow case trick, go outside and twirl the pillow case like you are preparing to lasso a calf. Then place the greens in the salad bowl (or leave in the pillow case) to crisp for at least an hour. Overnight is too long as they will start to wilt.

Toss the salad with dressing just before serving.

## Tina's Favorite Salad Dressing

2 to 3 parts extra virgin olive oil; 1 to 2 parts seasoned rice vinegar (Marukan is the brand I use); a dribble of tahini; lots of minced garlic chives; generous pinches of minced basil or marjoram; a good squeeze of lemon juice and ground pepper to taste.

## Interesting Salad Adds

Diced cantaloupe + marjoram; fresh corn + basil + lemon thyme; thinly sliced zucchini + savory; feta or goat cheese + green grapes cut into quarters; bits of oil-cured black olives; and sprouts!

## How to Measure Fresh Herbs

When using fresh herbs in recipes that list measurements for dried herbs, use three times more fresh herbs than dried—even more if you like. Dried herbs are more concentrated since they don't contain any water.

## No Doubt Sprouts

Seeds provide all the ingredients needed to sustain life. You could live a healthy life eating only seeds, and sprouting them actually explodes their food value. Not only that, seeds are cheap and you can grow them in a jar under the kitchen sink. No soil, no sun, no sweat.

The only equipment needed to sprout seeds is a glass jar. A canning jar with a metal ring works nicely. Cut a piece of screen or cheesecloth to fit the ring of the jar. (If you don't have a metal ring, use cheesecloth and a rubber band.) Put

two tablespoons of seeds in the jar, then add enough luke-warm water to fill it two-thirds full. Let the jar sit overnight on the counter so you'll see it the next morning. Then, drain out the water and rinse the seeds several times with fresh water. Now put the jar in a dark place, such as under the kitchen sink, and remember to rinse the seeds several times a day so they don't dry out.

Incidentally, don't discard the mineral-rich water as you're rinsing and draining the seeds. Use it to water your plants or to make soup or bread.

In three-to-five days, the seeds will have formed half-inch sprouts, the perfect size for eating. If you want to let the sprouts "green out," put the jar on a sunny windowsill for a half hour. They turn green so fast you can almost watch photosynthesis take place. Put the sprouts in a covered container and store them in the refrigerator. They'll stay crisp for at least a week.

If you can't eat sprouts fast enough raw, toss them into soup or casseroles. Another way to use a lot of sprouts is to toast them in the oven until they are dry and then crumble them into the batter for pancakes, muffins and other breads.

What seeds to sprout? My favorite combination is alfalfa and radish seeds. Alfalfa seeds are available at health food stores. I use the radish seeds sold in seed packets or buy them in bulk at a farm supply store. If you buy seeds not specifically sold for sprouting, be sure they have not been treated with fungicide. Most treated seeds are colored an ungodly pink or blue for easy recognition.

Many other grains, beans and legumes (even some flowers like sunflowers) make good sprouts. Most vegetable seeds can be eaten as sprouts as well. There are some exceptions, (tomato seeds are one) so play it safe and do some research before you experiment. Most health food stores have books that will answer your questions.

## Preserving Herbs and Weeds

Using herbs and weeds fresh is always the first choice, but for most of us, Jack Frost puts a damper on tender snips from the garden. Drying and freezing the leaves is easy and provides welcome flavor and nutrition during the most desolate months.

To harvest leaves for drying, pick a sunny morning and head outdoors after the dew has dried but before it gets hot. (If you're going to freeze the leaves, it's not important that the weather be dry.) Use scissors or clippers to cut the tender tops off the plants. Many people are afraid they will hurt the plant but as long as you don't remove more than one-third of its leaves, no harm will be done. Plants actually grow more robustly with a little trimming, just as your hair does.

The traditional way to dry leaves is called hang drying. Simply bunch a small handful of plant material, tie the stems tightly with string and hang the bunches to dry in a well-ventilated place. Contrary to what you might think, it's best to keep the leaves out of direct sunlight since that degrades both the color and the essential oils.

Once the leaves are crackly dry, strip the leaves from the stems and store the dried leaves in airtight containers. For best flavor, don't crumble the leaves until you're ready to use them.

The length of the drying process will vary according to the weather and the amount of moisture in the leaves. Check the leaves after two or three days. It's important to store dried leaves promptly, otherwise they lose flavor due to continuing humidity changes. On the other hand, the leaves must be thoroughly dry or they will mold during storage. One rule of thumb is: Dry leaves will shatter, not bend.

My technique for drying herbs works faster than hang drying. I lay newspapers in the back of the car and place the greens in between the pages. On a sunny day, most plant material will dry within eight hours.

Most herbs dry well, as do dandelion, chickweed and violet leaves. There are some herbs, like chives and basil, which retain the best flavor when frozen.

For chives, no special preparation is needed. Simply mince the leaves, place in yogurt cups or plastic bags and pop them in the freezer. If you like this method better than drying, experiment with other herbs that have fairly dry leaves, such as tarragon, savory, thyme, mint and sage.

I've found that herbs with "wet" leaves, like basil, cilantro and parsley, taste best to me when frozen in water or oil. For this method, chop several cups of leaves in a

food processor or a blender. Add just enough water or olive oil to make a paste. I add a pinch or two of salt as well. Pour this green glop into yogurt containers and freeze.

Herbs frozen in water or oil can be used in soups, stews, dips, salad dressings and sauces. The flavor is concentrated, so adjust the seasoning accordingly.

One last note. Whether you dry or freeze herbs, be sure to label the containers!

## Seed Sources for Salad Bar Plants

**Adaptive Seeds,** 2509 Brush Creek Road, Sweet Home, OR 97386 adaptiveseeds.com. Pacific Northwest grown, open pollinated and organic seeds.

**Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds**, 2278 Baker Creek Road, Mansfield, MO 65704 rareseeds.com Over 1800 varieties of vegetables, rare flowers and herbs.

**Fedco Seeds**, PO Box 520, Clinton, ME 04927 www.fedcoseeds.com. Cooperative offering seeds, tubers, and organic growing supplies. Fun catalog to read. Wide selection of seeds in small to large quantities.

**Johnny's Selected Seeds,** 955 Benton Avenue, Winslow, ME 04901 Employee owned with focus on varieties for market growers and gardeners in short season areas.

**Nichols Garden Nursery,** 1190 Old Salem Road NE, Albany OR 97321 NicolsGardenNursery.com. Extensive selection of herb, flower and vegetable seed. Also offers garden, cheese and wine-making supplies.

**Peaceful Valley Farm and Garden Supply**, P.O. Box 2209, Grass Valley, CA 95945 groworganic.com. Organic seeds, fruit and nut trees and extensive line of tools and supplies.

**Pinetree Garden Seeds,** P.O. Box 300**,** New Gloucester, ME 04260 www.superseeds.com Big selection of flowers,

herbs and vegetables from all over the world. Many heirlooms, all GMO. Small packets at reasonable prices.

**Richter's,** Highway 47, Goodwood, ON, Canada, LOC 1AO www.Richters.com The most complete herb catalog, featuring both culinary and medicinal herbs and a wealth of information. You can even order chickweed seed and a French dandelion!

**Seeds of Change,** P.O. Box 4908 Rancho Dominguez, CA 90220 seedsofchange.com. Open-pollinated seeds and plants, primarily food plants, as well as garden supplies. Informative web site for organic growers.

**Seed Savers Exchange,** 3094 North Winn Rd, Decorah, IA 52101 www.seedsavers.org Nonprofit committed to preserving food plant seeds for future generations. Thousands of varieties listed. Swap with other growers as well as order from the collected inventory. An important group to support.

**Southern Exposure Seed Exchange,** PO Box 460, Mineral, VA 23117 www.SouthernExposure.com Heirloom vegetables and flowers for the Mid-Atlantic region including Tina James Magic Primrose seed! Catalog is a valuable gardening manual.

**Territorial Seed Company,** P.O. Box 158, Cottage Grove, OR 97424 territorialseed.com. Seed for salad greens, herbs, vegetables. Also vegetable plants, fruit trees, tubers and growing supplies.

## Updated Bibliography

**Flowers in the Kitchen:** Susan Belsinger. Colorado: Interweave Press, 1991. If you like to cook, you'll also enjoy **Greens in the Kitchen** and **Cooking with Herbs**, both of which Belsinger co-authored with Carolyn Dille.

**The Wild Wisdom of Weeds: 13 Essential Plants for Human Survival**: Katrina Blair. Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2014. Chickweed, dandelion, lamb's quarters and purslane on the list!

**Wild Flavors: One Chef's Transformative Year Cooking from Eva's Farm**: Didi Emmons. Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2011. Start with the lemon balm/ chive compote.

**Earthly Bodies and Heavenly Hair**: Dina Falconi. New York: Ceres Press, 1998. My go to for herbal body care recipes.

**Foraging and Feasting: A Field Guide and Wild Food Cookbook:** Dina Falconi. New York: Botanic Arts Press, 2013. A master recipe guide for foragers.

**Oriental Vegetables:** Joy Larkcom. New York: Kodansha International, 1991. The most complete reference on Asian greens.

**The Salad Garden:** Joy Larkcom. New York: The Viking Press, 1984. My favorite book on salad gardening.

**How to Grow More Vegetables:** (than you ever thought possible on less land than you can imagine) John Jeavons. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 1979. This book popularized raised beds to maximize growing space, i.e. "small is bountiful."

**Herbal Renaissance:** Steven Foster Salt Lake City: Gibbs & Smith, Publisher, 1984. Subtitled "Growing, Using & Understanding Herbs in the Modern World." A noted botanist provides practical advice and technical information about the health and safety of herbs.

**The Beautiful Food Garden:** Kate Rogers Gessert Vermont: Storey Communications, Inc., 1987. Shows how easy it is to weave food plants into the home landscape.

**The Complete Book of Edible Landscaping:** Rosalind Creasy. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1982. A classic which covers all types of food plants, including trees and shrubs.

**The Dandelion Celebration:** Peter Gail. Cleveland: Goosefoot Acres Press (P.O. Box 18016, Cleveland Ohio 44118-00160) Mr. Gail is an avid wild foods enthusiast. Other titles include: **The Delightful Delicious Daylily** and **Violets in Your Kitchen**.

**Hedgemaids and Fairy Candles:** The Lives and Lore of North American Wildflowers, Jack Sanders. Maine: Ragged Mountain Press, 1995 A delightful collection of wild plant biographies.

**Identifying and Harvesting Edible and Medicinal Plants:** "Wildman" Steve Brill. New York: Hearst Books, 1994. Excellent manual by the renegade forager in New York's Central Park.

**Peterson Field Guide to Eastern/Central Medicinal Plants:** Steven Foster and James A. Duke. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990. Excellent field guide with color photographs.

**The Herbal Kitchen**: Kami McBride. California: Conari Press, 2010. 250 practical and wide ranging recipes, including smoothies, ghee, pesto, oils, cordials and salts.

**The Bountiful Container**: Rose Marie Nichols McGee and Maggie Stuckey. New York: Workman Publishing, 2002. The best guide for container plants.

**The Front Yard Forager**: Melany Vorass Herrera. Washington: Skipstone, 2013. Encouraged me to try dead nettle and money plant.

**The Forager's Harvest**: Samuel Thayer. Wisconsin: Foragers Harvest Press, 2006. More than 200 color photos.

**Botanical Body Care**: Karin C. Uphoff. California: Cypress House, 2007. My favorite handbook for holistic treatment of common problems.

**Foraged Flavor**: Tama Matsuoka Wong with Eddy Leroux. New York: Clarkson Potter, 2012. I made dandelion flower tempura and dandelion flower jelly.

*What would the world be, once bereft*

*Of wet and wildness?*

*Let them be left,*

*O let them be left, wildness and wet;*

*Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.*

-Gerard Manley Hopkins

## About the Author

Tina James established her green thumbs with Maryland Public Television's organic gardening series "Good Earth Garden." She is the author of **Gardening from the Heart**, and Rodale's **Cooking with Herbs**.

As Tina Beneman, she is a therapist in private practice and an ordained minister of Spiritual Science. Visit her website to learn more about her services.

www.Tina Beneman.com


GARDENING
FROM THE HEART