

Wild

Edible NoteBook



*October
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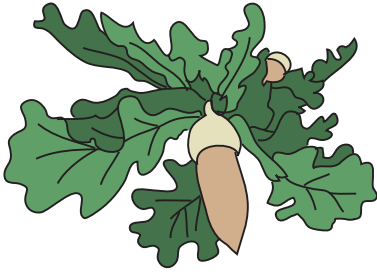
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Hi and thanks so much for checking out the *Wild Edible Notebook*, a monthly collection of stories about foraging and using edible wild foods.

Begun as a free publication in 2011, *The Wild Edible Notebook* was available by subscription from 2014-2015. I put it on hiatus after that so I could undertake other pursuits, chief among them a book I am writing.

This year, I decided to start reissuing the old Notebooks, a process that involves reading through and correcting any glaring errors. I will admit that my thinking has evolved on some topics since then, but for the most part I have not rewritten any of the stories.

For current writing, please visit my blog at wildfoodgirl.com, or social media at Facebook ([wildfoodgirl](https://www.facebook.com/wildfoodgirl)) and Instagram ([wild.food.girl](https://www.instagram.com/wild.food.girl)), where I post regularly. Looking forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,
— WFG



A Fall for Thick, Rosy Hips By WFG

I continue to ask myself if this year—when I have given myself so much more time to focus on the wild world around me—is more fruitful than ever, or if it just appears that way because I’m noticing things I didn’t before. I suspect the answer is a little of both.

Parts of Colorado experienced a very wet summer this year, particularly in the last month, as evidenced by the large scale flooding and destruction wrought upon the Front Range and small, mountain communities. Up high, the rains brought massive mushroom fruitings, and fruits swelled larger than life.

But in the same breath, it is also true that I become much more attuned to nature’s gifts with each passing year. Could it be that nature has been providing all this time, but that I have not had the eyes to see it?

In any case, legions of soft, plump, frost-kissed rosehips hang heavy upon their slender, prickly stems this season. Many are perfectly ripe, slipping off the ends of their



Fall rosehips around 10,000 feet in Breckenridge, Colorado. Photo by Gregg Davis.

branches with a soft, orange gush, leaving a sticky (but not overly sticky) paste to be licked off the fingers.

Already I canned a couple jars of divine

rosehip sauce, made by cooking the rosehips down in enough water to cover and then mashing the softened fruits through a filter to save the liquid paste while discarding their itch-causing seed hairs. Then I sugared the filtered rosehip stuff gently, cooked it down to thicken, and canned it.

But the rosehips continued to call to me after that, so the other day we headed out under overcast skies for a second batch, visions of whole dried rosehips for wintertime teas dancing in my head. Plus I wanted to de-seed a small batch to dry for use as rosehip “raisins” in granola, and to cook down another fresh batch into my first attempt at rosehip soup, a popular dessert in Scandinavia and Iceland (Hahn, 2010) that I read about in a couple different books.

We had the forest to ourselves that day due to the inclement weather.

*This walk is right outside our apartment, but it's a preserve, so no foraging allowed.
Photo by Gregg Davis.*





Gregg busied himself putting his camera away every time the skies opened to release short bursts of light drizzle, and then pulling it out again when the rain let up. But the views were gorgeous nonetheless, the floor of the aspen grove dappled with the first fallen yellow leaves of the season's change, while the rest remained fluttering in the breeze—green, yellow, and red in contrast with the backdrop of so many tightly-packed, tall, white trunks.

The rose bushes were interspersed, a few still green but most turning yellow and gold with fall's change, making the bright red hips all the

Red rosehips stand out strong against the yellow fall foliage and white aspen trunks. Photo by Gregg Davis.

more evident upon them. Some hips were tiny, others nearly an inch in length. Some bushes were tall; other came up only to my calf or below. These traits varied as we walked, as the aspect of the hill and growing conditions changed from dry slope to wet gulch, shade to sunny exposure.

I aimed mostly for soft hips, plucking them from branches and depositing them into my bag as we walked, leaving more hips upon the branches than those I picked, and spreading out the harvest

so as not to denude an area. In total, I got maybe a gallon—enough to dry a couple pints and still have some left over to play with in the kitchen.

By the end of the hike, a light snow was falling through the brightly colored aspens. This truly is a magical place.

A Rose is a Rose; A Hip a Hip

Rosehips are the hips, or swollen bases, of rose flowers in *Rosa* species both domesticated and wild.

As long as you have a true rose, it's okay to eat. In their 1976 wild recipe book, Arnold and Connie Krockmal indicate that garden roses can be substituted for wild roses in all of their recipes.

That said, not all rosehips taste alike, so the Scandinavian soup made from one species may taste very different than that made from another. Herbalist Michael Moore (2003) points out that “the hips are mealy and rather useless unless grown in a climate that has a distinct winter season.”

You may hear cautions against using cultivated rosehips; these stem from wariness over



Top: Resplendent fall colors in the Colorado high country.

Right: A light snowfall rewards us at the end of our journey.

whether or not a rose has been sprayed, as opposed to over the cultivar itself.

“Don’t use sprayed roses—especially those from a florist, which contain insecticides, fungicides and vermicides,” herbalist Henriette Kress writes in *Practical Herbs* (2011). “Even plant sellers may spray their offerings, so inquire before you buy.”

If you have a rose that hasn’t been sprayed, however, most parts are edible—including buds, young leaves, shoots, and hips. But you want to avoid eating the hips whole due to sliver-like hairs attached to the dry inner “seeds”

or achenes, that can irritate the digestive tract and cause “itchy bum.”

In addition, members of the Rose Family have cyanide-like compounds in their seeds, which is destroyed by cooking or drying.

Rosaceae, the family, is quite large, including such well-known genera as apples (*Malus*), strawberries (*Fragaria*), raspberries (*Rubus*), cherries and plums (*Prunus*), serviceberries (*Amelanchier*), and hawthorn (*Crataegus*), to

The hips come out after the rose’s bloom, and ripen into early fall, becoming sweeter as the frost bestows kisses upon them. Photo by Gregg Davis.





***Above:** A wild rose with seven pinnately divided, finely serrated, oval-shaped leaflets. **Right:** A straight-on look at a plump rosehip, flower side first. Photos by Gregg Davis.*

name only a few. There are approximately 100 genera within *Rosaceae* worldwide (around 50 in North America) containing 3,000 species, per Thomas J. Elpel (*Botany in a Day*, 2013 ed.). They are often characterized by five sepals and five petals with numerous stamens, along with oval, serrated leaves.

Both wild and cultivated roses belong to the genus *Rosa*, which are thorny to prickly deciduous shrubs with pinnately compound leaves bearing 5-7 oblong, toothed leaflets. Since the leaflets are odd-numbered, there should be one terminal leaflet that does not



have an opposite partner.

Rose leaves are dark green and smooth, with hips or haws that vary greatly in size and color. "The darker the rose, the more potent the



hip, goes one old saw,” writes Virginia-based forager Katie Letcher Lyle (2010).

Cattail Bob Seebeck (2012) gives a range of 3,500-11,000 feet in elevation for all wild rose species in Colorado. Local roses include Wood’s rose (*R. woodsii*), which has thorny branches. This appears to be what grows up high near me at 10,000 feet, and what I generally use for my rosehip recipes. The flavor of my local rosehips is mild and sweet, in contrast to the “tart” flavor of the large, succulent rosehips of rugosa rose (*R. rugosa*) on the East Coast, about which Lyle writes. Euell Gibbons describes *R. rugosa* hips on an island off the Maine coast as being larger than plums!

In Colorado we also have the densely bristly prickly rose (*R. acicularis*) and prairie rose (*R. arkansana*), as well as some non-native species that have escaped from cultivation. Jennifer Hahn’s recipes (2010) use Nootka rose (*R. nutkana*), which some authors report for Colorado too. The Krockmals, based in New York, write of *R. multiflora*, an

The tightly-packed prickles of a Colorado high country rose. Some wild roses have more widely spaced and distinctive thorns.



After a frost or two, many rosehips turn a translucent red, a sign that they are ripe and ready.

introduced species now gone wild in many areas. Suffice it to say there are many wild roses that bear edible parts.

“Some hips are plump and juicy while others may be sparse and mealy,” write Alan and Sue McPherson (1979), early Denver edible wild plant writers. “The only way to find a good stand is to search and taste.” Conduct this field-tasting of a rosehip’s exterior without swallowing the seeds and hairs by gnawing off the outside like miniature, pink ears of corn.

Vitamin C & So Much More

Rosehips are renowned for their high Vitamin C content. “Fresh, ripe rose hips are the most potent source of Vitamin C in the Rockies,” Cattail Bob Seebeck (2012) writes. “One rose

hip is equal to about 500 mg of Vitamin C.”

Rosehips were an invaluable source of Vitamin C for people in northern Europe and Great Britain during World War II, Lyle explains, when oranges and other citrus fruits were unavailable.

Sunny Savage gives a good overview of the various other nutrients in rosehips beyond Vitamin C in *The Many Uses of Rosehips*, one of a series of wild food videos available on YouTube, among them beta-carotene, calcium, iron, phosphorous, pectin, and phytochemicals like lycopene, bioflavonoids, polyphenols. She also notes that beads made from rose petals were the original rosary beads.

Today, herbalist Henriette Kress prescribes



Test a rosehip's flavor by chewing the red goo from its exterior, lest you ingest the sliver-like hairs and risk "itchy bum."

taking out some rose beads when you're "in need of some love, gentleness, courage—or a bit of prickliness." Making them is a bit of a lengthy process that involves chopping, heating and cooling a mass of petals several times a day for 3-5 days, forming them into balls and then drying—a process she describes step-by-step in her book, *Practical Herbs* (2011). She indicates the use of rosehips "if you're tired or exhausted, as a source of Vitamin C, and when you must recuperate from an ordeal."

Prepping & Processing

My earliest memory of rosehips dates back to the summers of my middle school years, when my family would vacation along a salt pond in Misquamicut, Rhode Island. I have fond memories of floating on inflated rafts out to the clam beds with my sister, sometimes capsizing in fits of giggles into the sucking muck.

Along the shore of the pond there were fat, ripening red rosehips. Having read brief accounts of their use as food, I'd turn these over and over in my hands contemplating just how, in fact, a person might go about eating them. But I would not eat my first rosehip until several decades later.

Most wild food writers say to wait until frost

renders an icy kiss upon the rosey hips before picking; it sweetens them and turns their color from opaque to translucent.

But for herbalists, Kress (2011) recommends picking rosehips before a hard frost, making it easier to slice them for drying. For the slice-and-dry method, she says to remove the stalk and flower-side leaf rosettes, then slice the hips into four equal parts. If you're drying them whole, on the other hand, she recommends removing the stalk but leaving the flowery bit intact to hasten drying.

You can carve the irritating seeds and hairs out of the fresh or dry hips, or make tea with whole hips and then use a coffee filter to strain out the hairs, Kress writes. Whole fruit can be

cooked and mashed through a filter to separate seeds from rosehip sauce and juice.

When I made my recent batch of "rosehip raisins" by separating seeds and hairs from the fresh hips before drying, I tried halving them and cutting the seeds out. Because my hips were so small and soft, however, this proved difficult, so I ended up squeezing out the seeds and their casings, along with a bit of edible orange goo. I set the soon-to-be raisins—the skin and whatever goo I could get along with it—out to dry. Then I took the seeds and remaining orange goo and cooked them down to extract a wee bit more rosehip

Rosehips are an excellent wild source of Vitamin C.

Photo by Gregg Davis.





sauce, which was yummy—strained of its itchy parts and mixed with honey—in both oatmeal and kefir (yogurt would work).

Cooking Wild

Rosehip jelly is a popular preparation dating back to medieval times. Recipes abound, though the one time I tried to make it I ended up with a gooey, sugary sauce that was more like a candy spread than a jelly. This got me thinking how much more valuable a sweet sauce is to me in the kitchen than jelly, which we don't eat gads of in our household. So I'll

A lovely batch of frost-kissed hips. For sauces and dressings, it's easiest to cook them down (in water) as is, then mash them through a sieve to extract the liquid and pulp.

leave it up to you to hunt for a rosehip jelly recipe if you feel so inclined.

But the sauce—again made from cooking down the fruits in a small amount of water, pressing them through a strainer to extract liquid and sauce, and then sweetening—has become somewhat of a staple in my kitchen. One of my favorite uses is a Ginger and Rosehip Vinaigrette I came up with a couple years ago (see page 37).

After cooking rosehips down and straining out the seeds, Hahn (2010) recommends whisking in warm water, arrowroot, and honey, stirring until thickened, “And Abracadabra—Nectar of the Gods,” she writes.

This is essentially what the various recipes for rosehip soup promise—a thickened, sweetened, strained rosehip puree that can be served with whipped cream for an unusual sweet dessert. I made my own version and served it to Gregg without the whipped cream, as we didn’t have any. He said as many nice things as he could think to say before sheepishly handing the bowl back to me, nearly full. “It’s enough to try to visualize soup as dessert,” he said, “but without the whipped cream I just don’t know. I think I’d rather have this on top of ice cream.” No matter. He’s right—that “soup” would be great on ice cream too.

Instead, I handed the leftover rosehip soup to Gregg the following night and asked him to make it into a barbecue sauce. He searched online for some recipes to guide him and then threw together a messy batch of rosehip barbecue sauce, which contained the rosehip soup/sauce plus ketchup, Penzey’s BBQ 3,000 spice because we had some on hand, spicy brown wet mustard in place of dry, brown sugar, red pepper flakes, garlic powder, Worcestershire sauce, red wine vinegar,



***Top:** Straining cooked rosehip pulp through cheesecloth worked too. I let the hot liquid drip out before squeezing the rest of the pulp through after it cooled. **Bottom:** My first attempt at rosehip soup came out mediocre. It’s a good thing it did—because the leftovers were fantastic in a spicy barbecue sauce.*



salt, and pepper. He painted that onto some chicken legs we had going on the grill outside, and served them slightly charred. They came out zingy and awesome.

Gregg and I have been together for five years now, and this is the first time he has agreed to make barbecued chicken, as it turns out due to some unpleasant childhood experiences with parboiled-and-then-over-grilled chicken that always came out too dry. But we are now converts, especially with rosehips in the picture. Later, I used the leftover bones and chicken bits to make a rosehip barbecued chicken soup with porcini and pozole. That turned out good too.

Above: My rosehip and seltzer also came out mediocre. Good thing the rosehip sauce went so well on pancakes mixed with chokecherry syrup, with a little confectioner's sugar sprinkled ovetop (below).



The Krockmalls recommend putting rosehip syrup over baked Alaska—which is essentially ice cream with sponge cake or “Christmas pudding” topped with meringue. They also have a recipe that uses a sauce of powdered rosehips and sour cream served with breaded and fried zucchini.

Seebeck (2012) writes that the entire dried-and-ground hip can be used, seeds and all, though I’ve also read of folks winnowing out the fine hairs before grinding—so various iterations of dried rosehip seeds are next on my list of things to try. Since the hips can often be found dangling from bushes long into winter, there’s

plenty of time for that, even after the snow begins to fall in earnest.

Hahn lists chilled fruit soups, harissa, chutney, sorbet, conserves, syrup, pastry filling, tarts, applesauce, pudding, and fruit leather as other culinary uses.

But “if you want to go all out,” the McPhersons write (1979), “serve rose-hip tea” using fresh (chopped) or dried (whole) rosehips steeped to the desired strength.

Elpel, too, is a big fan of rosehip tea. “Rose

The rosehip barbecue sauce was delicious on grilled chicken, and according to a friend on Facebook, not bad on pork either.





hip tea is one of my all-time favorites, even better if left in the kettle overnight,” he writes.

This is in contrast to Moore’s assertion (2003): “Let me be frank here: at best, rose hip tea tastes like feeble raisin and hibiscus tea.” Instead, he says, “You gather rose hips because they are up there, abundant, free, renewable, and they get you out of the house and away from the forced-air heat or woodstove smoke.” Not exactly a ringing endorsement of rosehip tea—but of being outdoors, yes.

Me, I like rosehips because they’re wild. But what else would you expect?

■

We are not the only ones who enjoy wild rosehips. Photo by Gregg Davis.

Green Powder By WFG

My how the weather has turned since the equinox. The sun shines so differently now. Here in the Colorado high country, the autumn sun can be so bright as dusk approaches that you can't see the trail ahead of you—and yet at the same time there's that nip in the air that says winter is coming. This year, winter appears to be approaching fast.

I had become a bit complacent during the lengthy warm, wet spell that preceded the current weather pattern. It felt like the mushrooms' long and abundant fruiting season would last forever.

Alas, no—the cold weather is here in earnest now, causing sniffles in our household, and biting at the wild plants as they change from green to gold, orange, to red—and I think to myself, *crap*, I should have gotten more dandelion greens when I had the chance.

A reminder to dry dandelion greens for winter came to me like an epiphany a little more than a month ago as I sat listening to



It takes a lot of dandelion greens to make a small amount of dandy powder. I wish I'd dried more dandelion greens this summer. It's so cold now, icicles are growing on my spice rack. Just kidding. Those are outside on the stairs.



Katrina Blair—longtime forager and founder of Turtle Lake Refuge (www.turtlelakerefuge.org)—at the Eagle Mushroom Festival, which recently added wild plants to its plate of fungi.

She spoke of making an annual “mineral superpowder” by drying and pulverizing edible greens—to mix into smoothies or juice, ½ teaspoon per beverage—and said that fall, when the plants’ leaves turn dark green, is the perfect time to dry and process them.

In addition to her work with Turtle Lake Refuge, Blair hosts wild food walks and talks in schools and many other venues, as well as a more intensive “local wild living program” that

Katrina Blair makes weeklong solo treks through the mountains each year, covering many miles and eating only that which nature offers. Photo by Dylan Ruckel.

runs from September to March and includes overnight field trips. She has a wild food CSA box available to 10 families each year, and on Tuesdays and Fridays in Durango, Turtle Lake Refuge serves a benefit lunch of locally grown, wild-harvested, and living foods for a suggested donation. When we spoke recently over the phone, she was preparing for a month-long trip to Norway, Finland, and Scotland to teach about the wild weeds of the world and to take some sustainable living classes herself.

"I guess I fell in love with plants when I was 11," she said. That year, she sat down among the plants and "felt really euphoric," because she was struck with a strong, revelatory feeling—that she'd be spending her life with them. "Then from that point on I just wanted to learn what I could about plants," she said.

After graduating from high school, Blair decided to eat all wild for a summer. She made herself a camp in the forest that she could bike to. "I brought a bunch of books with me and learned a ton," she said. "I did bring some flax seed, buckwheat, and sunflower seeds that I would soak overnight and eat for breakfast. I ate a lot of salsify, roots and greens, serviceberries, and dandelions, and I would make a tea almost every night with yarrow and strawberry leaves."

Later, she pursued a degree in biology from Colorado College and a degree in holistic health education from John F. Kennedy University. She founded Turtle Lake Refuge, "a nonprofit that celebrates the connection between personal health and wild lands," in 1998.

A Woman Walks

Today, Blair has become somewhat of a local Colorado legend for her 7-10 day annual pilgrimages, which she usually undertakes solo, traveling light with a sleeping bag, tarp, canteen, first-aid kit, knife, and a map, subsisting only on a meager diet of quick-foraged wild plants as she covers distances of sometimes more than 20 miles a day. "It's a way that I really recreate my own passions for what I do, and recenter and recharge," Blair said.

She's been doing some version of a

walkabout for many years. In the past 5 years, the journey has taken her to Telluride, each time via a new route, in time for the Telluride Mushroom Festival. "This year it took 7 days," she said. Generally, she travels less than 10 miles a day during the first 3 days—a period she describes as "transitioning."

"After that it's like I drop in and get more aligned with the frequency of nature and connect with where I'm at. Then I have so much energy I can hike 20-plus miles a day. Sometimes I go climb a mountain on the way," she said. "It's interesting where energy comes

"I wear a purple cabbage often to keep the rain off my head! No, just kidding. It was a spontaneous moment at the farmers' market that someone passing by who happened to be a professional photographer captured,"

Katrina Blair said of this shot by Bob Spenser.



from when I'm eating wild food right from the forest and not changing it in any way."

It's not so much that she keeps her belly full for the duration of the journey. Instead, she grabs what she can in passing—like stinging nettles rolled in dandelion greens to remove the sting, a handful of fireweed flowers or gooseberries—while making sure to keep moving. On her most recent trip, she found herself opening up to other energy sources besides food. "Living intention is really energizing," she said. It might explain why she radiates such a warm, happy energy.

Nutritious Green Powder

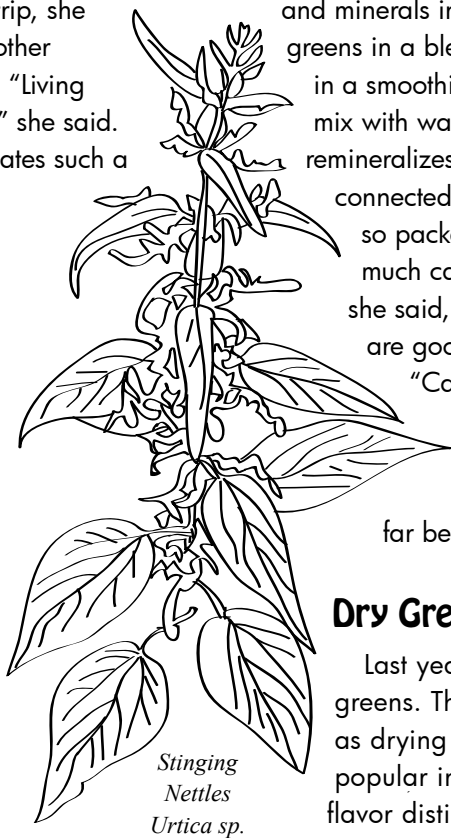
Blair makes her dried green powder every year. Originally, she made it using whatever she could find of the following six ingredients: dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), mallow (*Malva neglecta*), plantain (*Plantago spp.*), osha greens (*Ligusticum porteri*), lambs quarters (*Chenopodium sp.*) and amaranth (*Amaranthus sp.*). "That was my original six," she said. She'd dry, powder, and mix them together to use in the cold months when fresh greens were unavailable.

But since then, she has branched out to include other greens, among them hollyhock (*Alcea sp.*), Siberian elm (*Ulmus pumila*),

stinging nettles (*Urtica sp.*), thistles ground fine to destroy the spines, comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*)—basically "any edible green I feel happy about having in larger quantity, or whatever's available," she said.

She dries her greens in indirect sunlight or in a dehydrator below 115 degrees Fahrenheit in order to keep the chlorophyll enzymes and minerals intact. Then she grinds the greens in a blender and uses ½ teaspoon in a smoothie, or totes it along on trips to mix with water. "It restructures the water, remineralizes the body, and keeps me connected. Eating those foods—they're so packed with minerals that you pretty much can't get in commercial foods," she said, noting that while organic foods are good, wild foods are even better.

"Calcium, iron—all these amazing nutrients our body needs to survive—you get from that wild powder. It's a food. It's far better than a supplement."



Stinging
Nettles
Urtica sp.

Dry Greens Gastronomy

Last year, I dried stinging nettle greens. This was a bit of a no-brainer, as drying nettles for winter is quite popular in some circles, and their flavor distinctive enough to change the character of a dish entirely. Those nettles disappeared from my pantry shelves fast, in the form of tea, a much-loved pumpkin and nettle beer soup, and as an all-around vegetable bouillon used in various applications. That year I also dried garlic mustard greens (*Alliaria petiolata*) while



Top & right: *Argh, the dandelions between the dumpster and the road, next to the “Pick Up After Your Dog” sign, are so lush it’s killing me. I’m trying to dry bunches of dandy greens for winter, but this is simply not the ideal spot to collect them.*

visiting my parents in Connecticut, since the aggressive invasive species has become so pervasive in my childhood town. It has a strong flavor, but ultimately the wild mustard came to good use, dried and pulverized into powder, as the key flavoring in multiple batches of yummy potato gnocchi.

So this year, dried nettles and garlic mustard again sit in my closet, waiting to be relished on a cold day when fresh, local greens are unavailable.

This season, however, I expanded my repertoire of dried greens. I dried some dock (*Rumex sp.*) and bluebells (*Mertensia spp.*) for wintertime experiments, and blanched and froze a couple pints of cow parsnip (*Heracleum*



maximum), and mallow. But then I got that green powder in my head, and the frost came, and I panicked and wanted more.

Since I do not have a yard full of weed volunteers to call my own, I’m always on the lookout for off-the-beaten-path locations from which to gather my weeds—those generally unwanted, human disturbance-loving plants that

the environment is unlikely to miss very much— whether to use fresh or to dry for future use.

While there are plenty of lush, yummy-looking plants growing in town, it can be hard to know which have been sprayed with herbicides or pesticides, or which have taken on contaminants from passing cars.

Fortunately there are always dandelions. Up here in the Colorado mountains, we have the miners to thank for the proliferation of dandies in what might otherwise seem like virgin country. In fall I like to search at the edges of old mining roads, deep under the protection of dense willows, for long, green, healthy leaves. These can grow to the length of my arm!

If the dandelions are not flowering and you don't readily recognize them already, some key characteristics are leaf margins that are erratically lobed, with lobes often pointing



The short days, the long dandelions of fall.

back toward the leaf base, and a central midrib that exudes a white, milky latex when cut, as do other parts of the plant. Sam Thayer describes some lookalikes in *Nature's Garden* (2010), all of which are edible. I am not aware of any toxic lookalikes for the Colorado region, and Brill (1994) writes succinctly: "There are no toxic lookalikes."

In the past I've used fall dandelion greens—which are said to be made milder by a frost or two—finely chopped in salads with strong, sweet ingredients like shredded carrots to balance the strong flavor, as Brill recommends (1994), along with chopped raw onions, soy sauce, and occasionally tofu.

This year, however, I've been drying my dandies in the hopes that they'll do well as another dry, green, culinary herb to bolster my winter stores.

Although I like the idea of green powder—a blend to be used in various healthful applications—folks like myself hoping to experiment with each and every distinct flavor, or first-timers testing a new green, might consider drying individual species separately. Later it is easy enough to combine powders or chopped bits as desired.

So far, I've tried my dried dandy greens in two preparations. The first is just a simple tea



Above: Hunting unspoiled dandelion greens in the tall grass.

Right: A tea made of dandelion greens—yes, it's bitter. But I found that my body craved it.



made with crumbled, dry dandelion greens. In *Practical Herbs* (2011,) Henriette Kress lauds dandelions' use as a digestive aid, explaining that bitter plants like dandelions aid digestion by stimulating saliva, which then causes a chain reaction of secretions throughout the digestive system. I had dandy green tea on several occasions recently when I needed a warm up and we hadn't managed to incorporate green plants into our dinners, finding that I liked



Gregg's first and best dandelion vegetable burgers ever.

it despite the bitterness, and drank it down wholeheartedly. It felt very much as if the body sought it to fill an unmet need.

Kress warns against the use of dandelion by folks with low blood pressure, as it is a diuretic.

After describing the myriad health and medicinal benefits of the dandelion's various parts, including a tea of the roots specifically indicated for its value as a gentle diuretic, Brill (1994) writes not to use the root as an herbal remedy if you have irritable stomach or bowel, or acute inflammation.

Other books I checked contained no warnings about the use of dandelions, aside from making sure to harvest them where they have not been sprayed.

My second trial with dried dandy leaves was to use them chopped in our second-ever attempt at homemade vegetable burgers. These came out awesome, and we made a big batch so there are more in the freezer for when we want dinner to be easy-peasy. To make them, I followed "Tara's Intuitive Vege Burger Recipe," the "intuitive (if not amusing) recipe guidelines" she shared on my Facebook page after some prompting on my part.

This worked so well I'm sharing it word for word here. Tara writes: "Start with a mushroom sauté (add garlic, dried onion, seasoning of choice, even a vege bouillon cube) and roasting vegetable(s) like eggplant, peppers, tomatoes, even beets (a favorite). To these 'wet' ingredients you can add (previously soaked and) cooked lentils, (black) beans, rice, and/or other protein/carbs. For flavor you can add Worcestershire sauce, Tamari, Braggs, tamarind and/or whatever you have on hand. I usually add eggs to help bind (I'm not vegan). Pulse in a food processor, (or chop by hand with an old

The sun shines differently now that the fall equinox has passed. Time to gather the last of my wild greens.

fashioned circular hand cutter/chopper). Now for the dry ingredients: My options include vital wheat gluten, barley flakes, rolled oats, wheat germ, wheat bran, nutritional yeast, and/or whole wheat panko bread crumbs. Add wet to dry and fold together. Should have the consistency of a loose 'meatloaf'; add more dry ingredients if it looks too loose. Cook on a greased (coconut oil) sheet at 350 degrees for 40-60 minutes, flipping half way through. They freeze pretty well! And you can also make mock meatballs and cook similarly."

Gregg made our version of Tara's recipe (with some prompting) using ingredients we had on hand: sautéed porcini, onions, and peppers,



mixed with pre-soaked amaranth, quinoa, and Bulgur wheat and some cooked black beans for the “wet” ingredients. Then he mixed those with the dry (finely chopped dry dandelion greens, whole wheat flour, oat flour, wheat bran, vital wheat gluten, and rolled oats) and one egg. We mixed them up, pan-fried two in oil with the cover on so we could eat them right away, and baked the rest like Tara said. Both came out awesome.

I’ll admit I didn’t get a strong sense of the dandelions’ flavor, as we only used a couple teaspoons of dandy flakes for nine burgers worth of mix, but I’m still pleased to have gotten some extra green into the meal.

Recipes for the “Wild Life”

Katrina Blair published *Local Wild Life: Turtle Lake Refuge Recipes for Living Deep*, a 222-page recipe book on local wild, raw, and living foods, in 2009. The book starts with essays on underlying philosophies, with titles including “Living the Juicy Life,” “Wild Weeds Are Our Greatest Resource,” and “Permaculture Plants,” followed by recipes for Core Turtle Creations like “Chokecherry Macaroons,” “Phat Nettle Oaties,” “Silent Paradise Energy Balls,” and other treats Turtle Lake Refuge is known for. It concludes with recipes for drinks, soups, sun breads, main dishes, desserts, and other dishes that make up components of a meal, along with a year-long set of full menu plans. The book, and some food products like green powder, are available online at www.turtlelakerefuge.org.

Blair is currently working on a second book that will focus on 13 “weeds of the world” hand-picked not only for their edible and medicinal value, but also because they are



Fall dandy flowers add color to a high country landscape after snow falls and the sun melts out the land.

available in most locations worldwide. That book will include an interesting recipe using dandelion, thistle, and/or salsify seeds, cut from their fuzzy wings, to blend into a seed milk with honey, vanilla, and milk. And here I thought the seedhead was the only part of the dandelion that wasn’t edible!



Books in the Spotlight



Herbs for the Masses By WFG

Plant lovers who like free online info might already know the voice of Henriette Kress, an herbalist and herbal teacher based in Finland who has hosted the multilingual website, Henriette's Herbal (www.henriettesherbal.com), since 1995. It is one of the oldest—and quite possibly the largest—of the herbal websites out there.

A person can get lost reading at Henriette's Herbal, with essay after essay by Kress and others. The herbal and culinary FAQs alone are troves of useful information, collaborated upon by many, and succinctly delivered. Whenever Kress makes an appearance, there is that distinctive voice with its "gentle wit," as one writer described it, signed simply, "Henriette."

For those willing to get lost for days—or months—the tech savvy Kress offers the entire site (a 2.3 GB data disk including 80,102 files) in DVD form for \$25.

But for everybody else there is *Practical Herbs*—her 150-page full-color guide to using medicinal plants, available in English, Swedish, and Finnish, now with a Japanese translation under consideration.



Practical Herbs, by Henriette Kress, will soon be followed by a sequel. I received a free review copy but did not get paid to write this review.

Practical Herbs is ideal for the entry-level herbalist. It starts with an ample how-to section that's easily read and navigated, covering "The Basics" such as picking herbs, drying herbs, making and using herbal

teas, herbal oils and salves, tinctures, herbal vinegar, and herbal syrups.

Safety and sustainability are also addressed in this section, with simple tips like:

“Don’t pick large quantities of an herb you’ve finally located after years of searching. Instead pluck a twig, a flower, and a leaf, and take those home with you. Then double-check what you wanted the plant for, and which part of the plant you should gather for that purpose. Once you’ve identified a plant in the wild, you’ll spot it more easily in the future.”

She warns to avoid plants growing near stables, pastures, and outhouses, which “can host an abundance of gut bacteria—essential for digestion but not all that healthful to digest!,” with the added point that “with so much fertilizer about, any plants that accumulate nitrates will certainly have done so!”

And cleanup after plant picking, Kress writes, should involve discarding “stems and the like” under nearby foliage so as not to make a mess of nature.

After “The Basics” follow 23 accounts of specific plants, including but not limited to angelica, beggarticks, black currant, calendula, California poppy, chickweed, cleavers, coneflowers, dandelion, horsetail, rose, stinging nettle, St. John’s wort, vervain, willowherb (fireweed), and yellow dock (curly dock). Each plant account contains information on classification, description, best time to harvest, lookalikes, important constituents, picking and processing, effects and uses, recipes for herbal

remedies, warnings, safety for children and pregnant women, and also food uses—which is of course right up my alley.

Interspersed with the plant accounts are informational sidebars on plant families, herbal remedies for various ailments, and recipes.

Budding Herbalist Take(s) Note(s):

There’s a fine line between edible and medicinal plants. Some food plants act on us in healthful ways, with or without our knowledge.

Take dandelions, for instance. Nearly every part of the dandelion can be good food, especially if you have a palate for the bitter parts. But there are also myriad health benefits to making dandies a part of one’s diet—they’re good for a stressed liver, hepatitis,

or those who work with solvents, Kress writes; they aid in digestion, can lower blood pressure, treat loss of appetite, and help with heartburn from too little stomach acid. Once you accept those propositions, it’s just a hop, skip, and a jump to brewing stronger batches to treat what ails you, or better yet prevent a future

affliction. (Kress cautions that “dandelion leaf is so diuretic, its French name is *pissenlit*—‘pee in the bed.’” She recommends against use by folks with low blood pressure for this reason.)

My personal experience with herbal medicine is limited. I’ve made a handful of tinctures by steeping



*Dandelion,
duh!*

herbs in alcohol—sometimes following very technical instructions to do so, and sometimes flying somewhat blind, mixing this and that and hoping for the best. These I use to address a few ailments in our household. But generally speaking I'm more of a pick-and-eat kind of gal. It's not that I haven't tried to navigate the tech-speak of experts like the late great herbal guru and funnyman Michael Moore, for example, but sometimes you just need the big picture, plain and simple—a need I found that Kress' book addressed.

So I found myself taking notes as I read *Practical Herbs*—not just to use in this review, but also to enhance my practice. I jotted stuff down about tincturing—like what proof alcohol to use, whether to go with fresh or dry herbs, and when and why water should or should not be added—before getting excited enough to head out into the field for some plants to make a few new tinctures for winter.

I enjoy how Kress is always telling us to label our jars with what, when, and where, and I found her instructions for herb-infused oils enlightening—in most cases she recommends using dry herbs for safety reasons, while outlining potential “problems with oil,” including a botulism danger when using fresh herbs to infuse oil for internal use. Her preventative tips are four-fold: Add salt; use dried herbs; add vinegar to make it acidic; use within 3 days.

She describes how to make herbal syrups for when you are sick, explaining that the sugar helps to increase mucus production, while cautioning against its use if digestive problems are present.

Among the specific herbal remedies she

includes are a gardener's salve, “good for painful muscles and dirt-roughened skin,” that combines oils from either meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) or balsam poplar buds, and calendula flowers or plantain (*Plantago*) leaves. Or there's a warming salve “useful for where winters (and feet) are cold” — perfect for me, as I live in a town nicknamed Brecken“Fridge” for its biting winters—and a cinquefoil paste for inflamed cuticles that a chronic nail-biter like yours truly desperately needs.

For teething babies, she recommends dipping a cloth into chamomile tea and freezing it, “then give it to baby to chew on.” And “if your child itches all over with chickenpox,” she writes, “gently wash the skin with a cooled chickweed tea or soothing chickweed (*Stellaria media*) ice cubes several times a day.” There's also a recipe for a wild green smoothie—not to be drunk every day ad infinitum—but for a couple weeks as a spring tonic.

Kress is a practicing herbalist, which means, she explains at Henriette's Herbal, “I correct imbalances, using herbs in combination with diet and lifestyle changes. An herbalist can probably help you if you're feeling tired all the time, have digestive or sinus troubles, if you have recurring infections (like, for instance, cystitis), if your period's too long, short, crampy or just too much, if you can't sleep, and even if you get the flu too often to suit you. Small uncomfortable things like that, which doctors usually can't do much about.” She does not consult with clients via email, so for folks seeking an herbalist, she recommends checking bulletin boards at health food stores, co-ops, or vegetarian



restaurants to find a local practitioner. “And in Helsinki?” she writes, “There’s me.”

The vision for *Practical Herbs* was bigger than one woman’s practice, however. It was “to bring herbs to the masses,” she said. “To show just how easy they’re to pick and use, and how effective they are for a variety of problems. To get people to understand how easy it is to make salves, tinctures and so on—including potential trouble spots and how to avoid them.”

Practical Herbs does well for that purpose. It makes for a great herbal textbook—easy to follow, with readable text and color-coded folios for page numbers and section names. The

Henriette Kress left a finance position at a big multinational more than a decade ago to study and spread the love of plants and plant healing. Photo provided.

plants are in alphabetical order by common name, and the index is by common name, scientific name, herbal use, and preparation.

Beyond beginners, experienced herbalists are likely to appreciate so many good ideas packed into this tight, handy volume.

Herb Nuts Collaborate

Kress graduated from Helsinki University of Economics in 1991 and worked first in

logistics and later as a finance manager for “the local branch of a huge multinational” before leaving the position in 1998 to study under the U.S.-based Michael Moore at the Southwest School of Botanical Medicine (www.swsbm.com).

“Michael was great on physiology and plants and how to combine the two,” she wrote to me. “His under/overactive organ system setup works very well for almost all clients.” The details of Moore’s system are available online at www.swsbm.com/ManualsMM/HRBENRGT.pdf. “But of course, being steeped in this for half a year really helps to understand it,” she said. “Also, just think: 26 herb nuts in the same room for months on end! Herbal excursions with other students in the weekends, week-long herbal travels with the class to more distant spots—it was utterly lovely.”

Today, she uses Moore’s intake form for almost all of her clients, with the exception of those with very straightforward problems. She combines his system with information on lifestyle problems (problem foods and nutrient deficiencies, for example) from Paul Bergner (www.naimh.com) and humoral theory from Christopher Hedley (www.henriettesherbal.com/articles/hedley-humours.html). In humoral theory, Hedley explains, the body’s four humours—earth, air, fire, and water—give rise to the four temperaments—melancholic, sanguine, choleric, and phlegmatic, respectively. These can be identified and balanced with a combination of diet, activities, and herbs.

“The combination of these works exceedingly well,” Kress said of the teachings underlying her herbal practice.

Have Your Herbal Wisdom and Eat It Too

Those inclined to eat their herbs are not to feel left out, since Kress includes a section on food uses for each of the plants described in *Practical Herbs*. I was inspired by the recipes and culinary uses of plants or plant parts unfamiliar to me.

On currants, for example, Kress writes that those with scented leaves—in her case the black currant *Ribes nigrum*, which bears an edible berry widely used in Europe for juice—also bears edible leaves.

My favorite wild black currant in Colorado is the trailing black currant (*R. laxiflorum*), and I used the leaves once to flavor some crazy pickled milky cap mushrooms (*Lactarius deliciosus*), but I am still not very experienced with *Ribes* leaves, and quite curious about them. Needless to say I ate that part of the book right up. Among the uses she recommends are the leaves and buds for allergies, or the leaves alone for sandwich spreads, sugar, and to make a lemony syrup.

“Alternate leaf-gathering years with berry-picking ones, according to the rhythm of the plant,” Kress writes. “Pick leaves when flowers and berries are less abundant and when leaf growth is lush.” This is such a good point—and so widely applicable. If rosehips aren’t in season one year, for example, it doesn’t merit searching far and wide to strip nature of her every last fruit. Instead, something else is likely to be plentiful in a given season. There can always be rosehips another year.

Lately I’ve been drinking dandelion leaf tea to stimulate digestion before and/or after meals

because of Henriette Kress. She also writes that fried pieces of dandelion roots or flower buds, served with croutons, become tasty after you've accustomed yourself to the bitter flavor, and she includes a recipe for dandelion salad with feta and boiled eggs that sounds yummy. She also writes that the "milk" of the dandelion leaf, flower stalk, and root can be used to make temporary tattoos.

Herbal Computerista

The multitasking Kress did the design and layout of *Practical Herbs* herself, with a little help from friends and the tutorial that came with the layout program. "It's very expensive to have others do the layout," she wrote to me. "As herbalists have no money, I decided to do it myself." Kress is a Linux lover, online since 1992.

This month, she is close to completing her 168-page sequel, *Practical Herbs 2*. It contains instructions for making herbal honey, herbal sugar, green powder, herbal salt, and herbal compresses and wraps; short recaps on herbal syrups, oils and salves; and another set of herbs including thyme, horse chestnut, elecampane, chamomile, juniper, catnip, goldenrod, ground ivy, mallows, true mints, hawthorn, willows, plantains, sage, lemon balm, burdock, mullein, garlic, valerian, and horsemints. There are remedies for menstrual problems, post-partum depression, infertility, migraines, digestive problems, small wounds, bruises, and hemorrhoids "with picture!" she writes, and some blurbs on the medicinal uses of cucumber, onion, celeriac, cabbage and potatoes.

So if you like book one, another is not far away—it's looking like late October for the

PDF and early November for the book, Kress said. Next year, she plans to finish texts for her distance students, and the year after that it's between a book on wild greens or one on having fun with plants. "THEN I'll do another medicinal herb book," she said.

Kress and her books can be found online at www.henriettesherbal.com or Facebook (www.facebook.com/henriettesherbal). There are Kindle, PDF, and print versions available for both books.

If you're looking for a practical guide to using herbs medicinally that is broadly applicable, *Practical Herbs* and its sequel are unlikely to disappoint.

Meanwhile, the author has this to say: "Remember to have fun—else what's the point?"





Recipes

A decorative wavy line with three peaks and three troughs, positioned directly below the word "Recipes".

Ginger Rosehip Vinaigrette By WFG

I can hardly recall anymore what it felt like a year and a half ago when I crutched my way into the kitchen, every step an accomplishment due to the sharp, shooting pains in my knee from the recent surgery, to make this salad dressing—which I served atop my first meal after three days subsisting only on crackers. It was well worth the effort.

Ingredients:

Rosehips
Vinegar
Garlic, finely chopped
Pickled ginger, finely chopped
A splash of the ginger-pickling liquid
Olive oil

Instructions:

1. Make the rosehip “sauce” by cooking down whole fresh or dried rosehips in a little water until soft, then mashing through a strainer to get a thick rosehip juice, leaving the seeds behind. Add sugar to taste, and simmer together until the sugar dissolves. Cool.
2. Mix salad dressing ingredients together to taste, then let the dressing sit out for a bit.
3. Serve on salad. It’s nice with avocados, spinach, shredded carrots, pan-fried tofu cubes, and sesame seeds, to name a few.



Granola Bars with Rosehip Raisins & Wild Seed By WFG

These chewy wild granola bars, adapted from my friend Sue's grandmother, have some stuff in them that's real good for you, and other stuff that's not so much good for you—but they make a ridiculously delicious pocket snack. And of course they can be adapted for all manner of wild seeds, fruits, and nuts. You might want to go easy on the sugar.

Ingredients:

- 2 cups oats
- 1 tbsp evening primrose seeds (*O. villosa*)
- Rosehips
- 4 tbsp butter
- ¼-½ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup honey
- 2 tsp vanilla

Instructions:

1. Make rosehip "raisins" by carving out the seeds and attached hairs of dried rosehips, or halving, cleaning and drying fresh rosehips.
2. Mix oats and seeds (subbing other seeds as needed) and bake at 350 degrees for 12-18 minutes until browned.
3. On the stovetop, melt butter, sugar, honey, and vanilla.
4. Then combine everything in a big mixing bowl—the rosehips, melted butter and sugar mixture, and baked oats and seed combo and mix well.
5. Press the sticky stuff into a pan using a layer of baking paper and let cool.
6. As it cools, cut into squares or rectangles.



Rosehip Membrillo

By Wendy Petty www.hungerandthirstforlife.blogspot.com

When it comes to creating recipes, inspiration comes from all sorts of strange places. In the case of rosehip membrillo, it came from a specialty cheese store. One day, while cruising through its chilly aisles, a cheese accompaniment caught my attention—quince paste. Quince paste is like an ultra-thick and reduced jam; you can cut into it with a knife and it will hold its shape.

Since I haven't seen any quince around here to forage, my mind started rolling over the other possibilities. Apple? Kinda ordinary. Plum? Maybe too moist? Back to things related to apples—I've got it, rosehips! And since rosehip paste sounds rather uninspiring, I decided to call it rosehip membrillo.

Rosehip membrillo pairs beautifully with sharp cheeses. I particularly like it with goat cheeses. I've also found it to be quite nice in meat sandwiches. Another way that I serve rosehip membrillo is to cut it into cubes and roll it in nuts; it tastes rather like a Turkish delight that way. Experiment. I find



Rosehip membrillo sounds a lot better than rosehip paste, and it goes well with sharp cheeses. Photo by Wendy Petty.

that rosehips taste like sun-dried tomato meets rose petal meets tea.

Ingredients:

Rosehips
Sugar
Water

Instructions:

1. Lightly chop whatever quantity of rosehips that you have, place them in a pan with double that amount of water, and let boil for 20 minutes. Strain out solids, saving liquid.
2. Place the boiled rosehips into cheese cloth, and give it a good squeeze so that all of the pulp comes out.
3. Combine the pulp with the saved liquid, and add an equal amount of sugar.
4. Bring to a simmer and let the mixture bubble away until it is so thick that when you draw a line on the bottom of your pan with a spoon, it doesn't close up straight away.
5. Pour the rosehip membrillo into a lightly greased pan (aim for 1" thickness of fruit). If you live in a dry environment like I do, put the pan in a cool, dry place for a week or so. Otherwise, place it in an



Denver-area rosehips in winter. Photo by Wendy Petty.

oven on the lowest setting (no greater than 125 degrees Fahrenheit) for 1-2 hours to dry further.

Shrimp with Spicy Rosehip Cashew Sauce

By Wendy Petty www.hungerandthirstforlife.blogspot.com

When I taste rosehips, my palate picks up a distinctive taste of tea leaves. The flavor of rosehips can vary from plant to plant, and location to location. But I seem to always taste hints of tea, and it's that taste of tea that inspired this particular rosehip recipe.

Ingredients:

Shrimp
Salt & pepper
Lard or cooking oil
Garlic
Ginger
Veggies
Shaoxing rice wine
Rice vinegar
Soy sauce
Cashews
Rice
Tea
Rosehip syrup or membrillo
Whole chilies (dried or fresh)



Shrimp with spicy rosehip cashew sauce. Use whatever veggies you like. Photo by Wendy Petty.

Instructions:

1. Make a batch of rice with tea instead of water.
2. Peel and dry your shrimp. Season them with a little salt and pepper. Heat up lard in a cast iron pan to a medium-high heat,

then toss in the shrimp and cook on both sides until they have just gone pink all the way through, and browned slightly on both sides. Remove the shrimp from the pan.

3. Add more lard to the pan if necessary, as well as a few small whole chilies (dried or fresh), a few smashed cloves of garlic, and some matchsticks of ginger. Stir-fry whatever vegetables you have on hand. Get creative; I used bok choy and spring onions. As soon as the veggies are cooked, remove them from the pan.

4. The final step is to make the sauce. To the still-hot pan, add a few spoonfuls of rosehip membrillo or syrup, enough water to make a sauce, a splash of Shaoxing rice wine, a splash of rice vinegar, some soy sauce, and some more chilies, garlic, and ginger. No need to be fussy; just taste the rosehip sauce and make sure it has a pleasing balance of flavors. Simmer the sauce for a few minutes, until glossy and thick.

5. Quickly return the shrimp to the pan and coat them with sauce, then toss in a handful of cashews. Serve on a bed of rice.



Rosehips often remain on the bush through winter, a boon for foragers craving wild food when snow abounds.

Photo by Wendy Petty.

