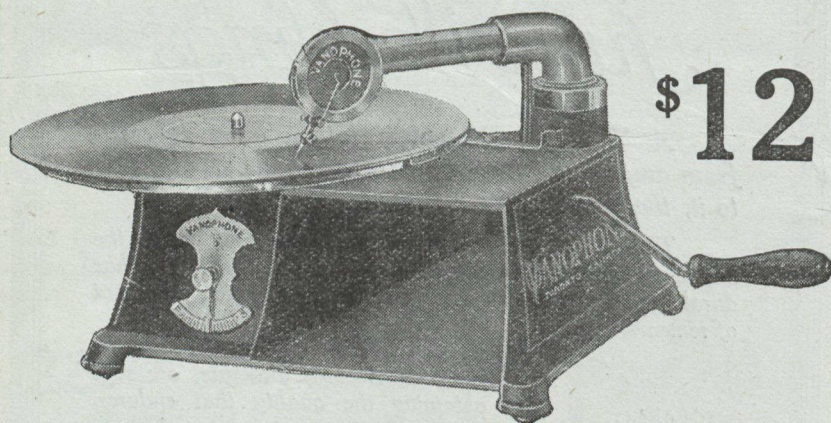


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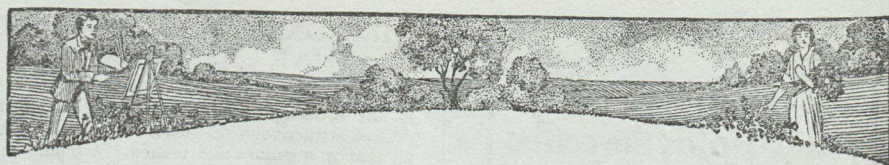
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PICKED WITHOUT PLANTING

A Study of Edible Weeds

By MARY D. CHAMBERS

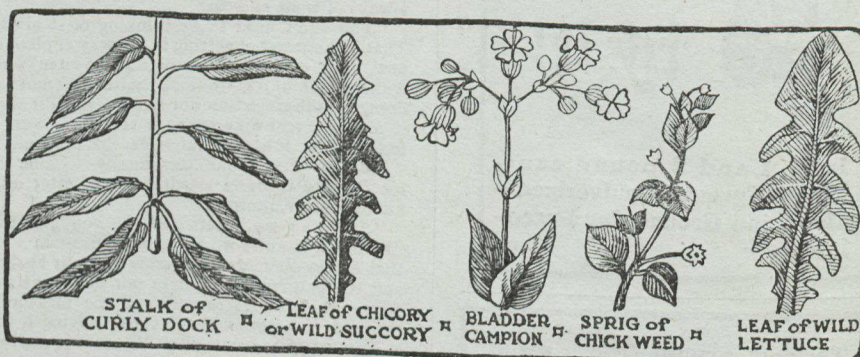
FROM early spring until late fall Nature's garden has something to offer us, and many pleasant hours, good for both body and mind, can be spent in searching for these oft neglected treasures.

One of the first of the edible weeds is the dandelion. This humble plant seems specially designed by Nature as a spring tonic. Eaten as boiled greens, or salad, two or three times a week, it is better than anything the drug store affords as a liver stimulant. The strong tasting leaves should be courageously eaten, but for the faint hearted they may be scalded and then boiled for at least half an hour in one or two changes of water. Such treatment makes them very palatable.

Even before the dandelion appears, one may dig up, in moist places, the long, substantial root of the wild horseradish and grate it as a condiment. This is one of the plants which have es-

boiled nettles, and as the stinging property is lost in cooking, a succulent dish results.

There are several varieties of correl, all having the characteristic acid flavor, due to the presence of oxalic acid, to which is also due the acidity of rhubarb, and all of them are capable of being put to various edible uses. Sorrel makes a delicious salad, and combines well with cream cheese, eggs, fish, and other foods of not very pronounced flavors. A sorrel sauce, made like mint sauce by adding vinegar to the chopped leaves, is good to serve with lamb. A piquant and quickly prepared condiment to serve with cold meat is made by mincing the leaves with just one half their volume of sugar, dusting with pepper, adding just a pinch of salt, and moistening the whole with vinegar. Boiled sorrel makes good greens to accompany fish or meat; a cream of sorrel soup is made by adding a cupful of chopped boiled sorrel to twice or three times that volume of thin



aped from the garden, and it still retains the properties of the cultivated variety.

The young shoots of the bladder campion, otherwise known as the cow bell, are just as good as green peas, which they closely resemble in flavor. These may be had soon after the snow is off the ground, and should be cooked by steaming in a covered vessel without the addition of water, so that none of the flavor may be lost, and served on toast like asparagus.

Another springtime delicacy is furnished by the cinnamon, or buckhorn fern. This is the coarse fern of the road and hillsides. If the plant is pulled up by its cluster of young shoots in spring, and the leaves stripped off, there will be found inside the stem sheaths, like the kernel of a nut, a crisp, succulent strip from one and one half to two inches long. This delicacy may be sliced into salad, or cooked like asparagus, or chopped into a milk soup or a clear bouillon. It is a delicious relish, and well worth the time spent in picking it.

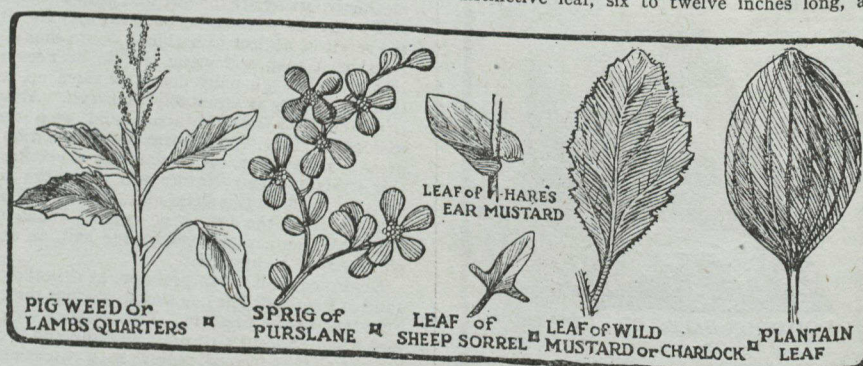
The young tops from the wild hop, cut off and boiled in the spring, also make a very agreeable

white sauce; and even tarts can be made from the chopped leaves stewed with sugar. Like rhubarb, sorrel is said to be antiscorbutic, diuretic, and cooling.

The leaves of the wild garlic, or onion, used to be so highly valued in England that they were called "sauce alone." There are several species of wild garlic, and though they are rank in flavor unless modified by cooking in several waters, they are wholesome, having the diuretic and sudorific properties of the cultivated sorts.

The field garlic, or wild onion, is detested by farmers, for if eaten by cows, it will taint the milk, but the rather spreading green leaves may be boiled and eaten by the farmer's family with great benefit, and the curious little bulbs which sometimes appear on the flower stalks can also be used on the table.

The wild lettuce is found in late summer in most open places. It grows unusually tall, often much over three feet in height and bears clusters of insignificant light yellow blossoms, which are replaced by little woolly tufts. It has a very distinctive leaf, six to twelve inches long, and



dish. They are particularly good when creamed, or they may be served with butter, like asparagus. The various varieties of dock are all edible, but the curled or sour dock is the best. It has narrow, lance-shaped leaves, with irregularly wavy or curly edges, and when boiled makes a very good dish, with an agreeable acid flavor.

There are many varieties of mustard, and though they are known as very troublesome weeds, not a single unwholesome plant is to be found among them. The leaves and succulent stalks of both the black and white mustard make excellent greens, without any of the wild taste present in some of the other varieties, and with a certain relishable quality in their flavor. They are considered very wholesome, having antiscorbutic properties.

Another mustard is the hare's ear. It looks something like a miniature cabbage, when young, and the leaves have little ear like tips clasping the stem. The ball mustard and the false flax or yellow weed have the same kind of leaf. Other varieties, with variously shaped leaves, are the tansy mustard, the tumbling mustard, and the wild mustard or charlock. All of these have the characteristic truss of yellow blossoms, and all of them are good to eat.

The ox eyed daisy, like the mustards, is a noxious weed, but nevertheless possesses virtues of the culinary order. Its root leaves, acrid when raw, are quite edible when cooked. The method should be the same as for dandelions.

M. Soyer, that prince of cooks, recommends

deeply waved, with a tip shaped like a triangle. The wild lettuce may be cooked like dandelion.

Lamb's lettuce grows about a foot high, and has long, narrow, light green leaves, with clusters of insignificant blue flowers in spring. It makes a delicate salad, or it may be cooked like spinach.

It seems like sacrilege to eat the marsh marigold, the "Mary-bud" of Shakespeare, but its round, thick, kidney-shaped leaves make very good greens if boiled. When young, the young flower-buds, too, may be pickled. The marsh marigold grows by river-sides, and in marshy places, and is often, but incorrectly, called a cow-slip.

Puslane, or pusley, is a little plant which trails on the ground, branching out in a circle. The stalks and leaves are reddish green, the leaves roundish oval, thick, fleshy, and hardly as big as the thumb nail. The leafy stalks, when cooked, are deliciously succulent, and make a very attractive looking dish. They seem to go particularly well with cottage cheese, cheese soufflé, or grated cheese. They also make a good pickle, or may be used raw as a salad, or with a dressing for sandwich filling.

Tansy cakes, a goody from our forefathers' kitchens, were made of chopped liver, potatoes and tansy. The modern housekeeper uses the chopped leaves, which have a strongly aromatic odor, to flavor hash and meat cakes. The plant grows rather tall, has feathery leaves, and button like yellow flowers.