

Wild Edibles in Our Local Parks

What can you eat in our temperate rainforests?

If you are foraging with your child, you are the expert in your child's eyes. We ask children to check with an adult before eating wild edibles. Get to know your local plants so that you can advise your child about what is safe to eat.

When you are eating wild food, be conscious of your impact on the land around you. The plants and the animals need those leaves, flowers, and berries too!

This is a quick guide to local edibles that your child might encounter during the year.

All Year

Western Hemlock



Top of hemlock needles



Bottom of hemlock needles

This common tree grows in the shady forests of the Pacific Northwest. It has edible leaves. You can tell a tree is a hemlock because the needles are different sizes and stick out in random directions. You can also tell because when you flip the needles over, they have white stripes underneath.

Be aware that the relatively rare Pacific Yew looks similar and is not edible. In fact, it has berries that look a lot like huckleberries, and these berries are poisonous. The yew needles are more regular in size and flatter, and they do not have white stripes underneath. If you live in an urban area, you may find yew in use as a hedging plant.

Plantain



Broad-leaved plantain



Narrow-leaved plantain

Broad and narrow-leaved plantain are both common garden weeds. They're also very useful plants. While the leaves are edible, their most common use is as a healing plant. Crush or chew the leaf and apply it to mosquito bites or stinging nettle stings.

Spring

Salmonberry



This plant has three leaves that look like a mustache and a goatee (two at the top, one bigger one at the bottom). The leaves and stalks of salmonberries are edible in the springtime. In late spring, the plant makes an orange-red berry.

Maple Trees



The flowers and early leaves of the vine maple and bigleaf maple are both edible.

Dandelions



The flowers and leaves of our local dandelions are both edible. Since dandelions often grow by the side of the road, be aware of where you are eating dandelions so that you eat from a place that is relatively clean.

Summer

Huckleberry



These plants look a lot like blueberries. They have thin, oval leaves. Many create tart round, red berries, while others have blueish-black berries.

Thimbleberry



Thimbleberries have soft, maple-shaped leaves. They produce a white flower that becomes a berry during the summer. These berries look a lot like raspberries, but they're shorter and fit on the tip of your thumb. They taste like raspberries as well. The leaves and stalks of thimbleberries are edible in the springtime.

Salal



This plant has tough, oval-shaped leaves that feel like shoe leather. In the summer, it creates berry-like structures that are blueish-purple and edible. You will often find these "berries" in late July to early September.