

Rules for Gathering Wild Plants

From: www.laurieconstantino.com/wild-edibles/alaska-wild-edible-plants/#ixzz369vakT3y

The rules I follow and recommend to one and all are:

1. **BE SMART:** Some plants have inedible or poisonous look-alikes. **Be sure** you know what you've harvested before eating any wild plant. Follow the wise adage: **"When in doubt, throw it out!"** There are many excellent field guides to edible plants. Consult one or more before going on foraging expeditions and again before you eat.
2. **BE LEGAL:** Unless you have permission, it's not okay to forage on private land or in most parks.
3. **BE RESPECTFUL:** Don't overharvest either individual plants or plant populations unless you're gathering pernicious weeds like dandelions. For example, never take more than 3 fiddleheads from a single plant or it may die.
4. **BE EFFICIENT:** Even though a plant is edible, its flavor may not be worth the effort of harvesting or preparing it, particularly when there are so many other tasty plants around. For example, chickweed is edible but unless you find it growing in large swaths, it may not be worth the effort to clean it. Before gathering a large amount of a plant that's new to you, cook and taste a small bit to make sure you like the flavor.
5. **BE CAREFUL:** Don't gather wild plants in areas sprayed with pesticides, or in areas where you don't know if spraying has occurred. Within 75 feet of a main road, dirt and pollution from traffic and exhaust fumes may contaminate plants. Avoid gathering wild plants in areas where animal waste is likely to be found.
6. **BE CLEAN:** Meticulously wash wild greens, being sure to remove all damaged leaves and flower buds. Wash first in cold water with 1/2 cup vinegar mixed in, then wash again in cold, clear water.
7. **BE CAUTIOUS:** As with all foods, some people are allergic to wild edibles. Eat only a small amount when eating a wild edible (or any other food) for the first time. Try only one new-to-your plant at a time.
8. **BE SAFE:** Before eating wild edibles, understand the steps necessary to make them edible. For example, morels and fiddleheads can be delicious but **MUST** be cooked; raw both are toxic and make people who eat them sick.