

## A Word to the Wise

The art of foraging for food is as old as mankind. What is a hobby to us was a necessity for all people of historical hunter/gatherer societies.

Before the advent of agriculture and domesticated plants, food gathered from the forest was the sole means of survival.

The necessity of obtaining a good plant field guide cannot be over stressed. Although a wild foods book can illustrate the plant, it fails to identify confusing look-a -likes that may or may not be edible.

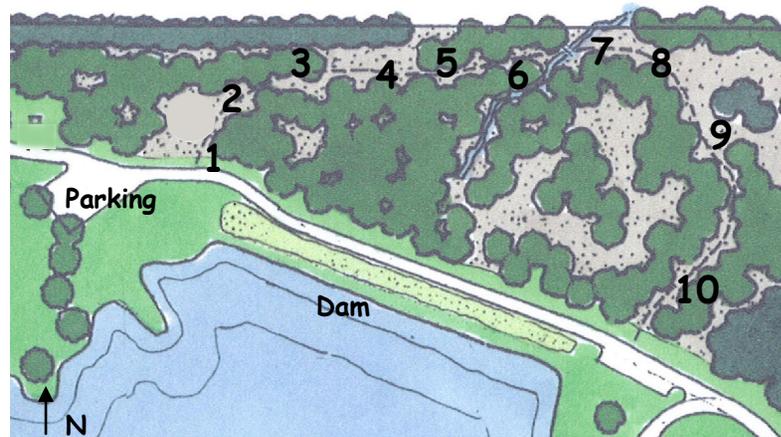
Use wisdom in choosing your collection areas -- **do not collect in parks or other refuges!** Only nuts, fruits, and mushrooms may be collected at Central Park. Remember, hunting plants is no different than hunting wild game. **Permission from the landowner is required.** Never collect rare or fragile species no matter how they might delight the palate. Never collect in areas where pollution is a problem especially if you are seeking aquatic species. Do not collect where spray or chemicals have been applied.

Extreme caution is urged for beginners venturing into the search for wild edibles. Be positive of your identification and sample only tiny portions at first. Some individuals may exhibit no reaction to a specific species while it can prove toxic to others.

You will note the obvious omission of mushrooms from this publication. Although several species of the sponge mushroom or morel (*Morchella*) are readily identifiable, many other mushrooms are easily confused. Some inedible species create indigestion; others can kill the chief.



## Central Park Trail of Wild Edibles



Welcome to the "Trail of Wild Edibles". As you hike this trail you will see many plants that have been used by humans as a food source over many generations.

This brochure will help you discover and appreciate some of these common Iowa plants. Please refer to the pictures and information on the inside of this brochure to learn how useful these plants can be.

For more information visit the Central Park Nature Center or [www.jonescountyiowa.org/conservation](http://www.jonescountyiowa.org/conservation)



1. **Wild Grape Vine:** Three-lobed leaf with toothed margin and pointed tip. Long flower clusters or grapes branching off. Purple ripe grapes are edible in the summer. **Native**



2. **Black Walnut Tree:** Narrow, 7-11 lance shaped, unevenly paired leaflets. Green spherical odorous fruits contain the nuts inside. Nuts edible in the fall. **Native**



3. **Plantain:** Known by their rounded leaves and long skinny flower spike. Use young leaves in the spring to add to your salad or as an addition to spring cooked greens. **Naturalized Non-native**



4. **Bedstraw:** Low growing spreading vegetation also known as cleavers. Can be used in your salad or sautéed with other vegetables. Seeds can be used as a coffee substitute. **Native**



5. **Black Raspberry Vine:** Oval shaped leaflets with sharply toothed margins on a thorny vine. White to pink clusters of flowers. Juicy black fruits are edible. **Native**



5. **Gooseberry Bush:** Toothed, lobed leaves. Thorns along the stem. Fruits range from green to purple when ripe, and may be bristly. Taste varies from sweet to tart. **Native**



6. **Wood Nettles:** Alternate, oval round leaves with finely toothed margins. **Caution: Stem and bottoms of leaves have stinging hairs.** Young leaves and shoots are edible. **Native**



7. **Jewelweed:** Delicate leaves. Stems succulent and watery. Young shoots are used as a cooked green. Leaves & stems used externally to treat poison ivy and stinging nettles. **Native**

8. **Burdock:** Looks like rhubarb. Purple flowers produce thistle like burs. When properly prepared the long tap-root, as well as young leaves and flower stalks are edible. **Naturalized Non-native**



9. **Garlic Mustard:** Heart shaped toothed leaves, small white flowers, long slender seed pods are all edible. Brought to North America to provide a garlic flavored herb high in vitamins A and C. Add young leaves to a salad or make a pesto sauce. **Invasive Non-native**



10. **Wild Apple Tree:** Look Up.... Oval alternate leaves with slightly toothed margins. Fruits hang by stalks and are green, yellow, or red. Wild apples make excellent pies. **Native**