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Poke Shoots Made Delicious Greens

By WAYNE GUTHRIE

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Do you remember what a 10-strike it was to come across tender poke, or pokeweed, shoots when searching for ingredients for one of yesteryear's favorite springtime dishes—fried greens?

These thoughts were suggested by a note from Amy E. Waters, 1414 E. 49th. It was an echo to this column's recent discussion of the giant poke bush in my back yard.

That plant sprang up mysteriously last spring in a lily-of-the-valley bed alongside the garage and now is as tall as that building and is loaded with berries.

"Your recent column about the poke stalk found a harmonizing chord in my heart," she said.

When she came to Indianapolis six years ago she bought a little cottage just north of the Arsenal playground and south of a wooded expanse between 49th and 52d Streets. It is a rural-like spot.

"I missed 'greens' picking in the springtime and wished for poke and narrow dock although there seemed to be no place for either," she added.

(Incidentally many know, or knew, narrow dock as sour dock, red dock, curled dock or yellow dock.)

But Mrs. Waters didn't have



Guthrie

to wait long for her wish to be granted.

"The second year a stalk of poke came up at my north kitchen window! It grew as tall as the eaves and became quite a tree.

"Birds loved it in the fall, never once knowing that as they had their dessert I was also having mine, right on the other side of the window.

"After frost I cut it and threw it over the fence onto the thicket side and now there's poke aplenty along fences and next to the woods.

"The lady who lives with me is not enthusiastic about such things. But how could I expect her to be? She was born and reared in the city.

"Every year I have the poke tree at my north window. Last year, however, no birds—as far as I saw—came to it and only a black grackle or two this year. Birds are not as plentiful the last year or two."

Her mention of poke and dock greens probably brings to mind many other choice young sprouts that were

plucked for that once-favored dish. Here are just a few—wild lettuce, hen pepper, lamb's quarters, dandelion,

mustard, thyme, sorrel, and cress and the green shoots of herry bushes, especially raspberry and blackberry.

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