

TIME FOR PICKING GREENS IS COMING

INDPLS. NEWS

By WAYNE GUTHRIE

Just around the corner is the period never to be forgotten by folks who in years that are gone lived in a small town or in the rural areas.

That's greens-picking time. It was then that nature offered a welcome relief from winter's dry and rough fare — "greens." That answered the human body's innate craving for green food. But it entailed something else — a desire to have it and willingness to work to get it.

Then folks — always the housewives — sallied forth with bucket, pail or basket in one hand and a sharp paring knife or other cutting instrument in the other. Kneeling or squatting, they plucked spring's first fresh, green, tender shoots that burst from the ground.

These they washed to remove sand, dirt or grit and then fried in an open skillet with bacon or ham or the grease of either. Properly salted and peppered — some liked a generous dash of vinegar — that made a dish that most folks of that era ate with a relishing appetite.

But, all that is changed now, gone but not forgotten. Modern transportation which knows no season brings to our store, market or supermarket fresh, green vegetables of all kinds from many warmer climes throughout winter.

Most moderns take such facilities for granted because they have not known anything

different. They were not around when fresh vegetables were not to be had in winter.

Despite all this, even today one finds occasionally somebody with enough of a spirit of adventure to hunt for and use some of those wild plants that once were eaten by the pioneers and Indians. It's a safe bet such venturesome moderns are of the older set who still may have nostalgic memories of a time when sometimes all the housewives of a village turned out to pick "greens."

One account said "half the pleasure is in gathering" such plants. It never could get an indorsement from any housewife who ever picked greens because it was hard work — kneeling or squatting.

Probably the most commonly known plant that is, or has been, gathered and eaten as greens is the dandelion, used since ancient times. Despite its bitter tang, it is good either cooked or in a salad — provided it is plucked when it first appears and still is fresh, young and tender.

It contains plenty of Vitamins A and C. We are told — although we never tried it or ever heard of any who did — that the water in which it is cooked can be saved and sipped as a spring tonic.

Did you ever hear of winter salads of dandelions being had by storing in the cellar in autumn and covering with litter or coal ashes, the strong thrifty crowns of the plant? We never did.



FEB 26 1969

It's a strange paradox that some who go to the trouble of planting and raising for greens such things as beet tops, Swiss chard, spinach and mustard, at the same time labor to eradicate from the garden a weed that makes splendid greens when plucked young and green. That's lamb's quarter, sometimes and in some places known also as goosefoot or pigweed.

Akin to the spinach or beet and, some say, as edible, it grows rapidly and has pale bluish-green leaves the shape of a lamb's hind quarter or a goose's foot.

Another pest that can make good eating if its young sprouts are peeled, scraped and boiled is the common burdock.

Cut off just above the ground when they are still tender, the young succulent shoots — not the roots, however — of the pokeweed and milkweed can be cooked and eaten much like asparagus tips. Incidentally, in some places asparagus has become a wild plant where its seeds have been spread by birds.

Others preferred as greens by many housewives included wild mustard, sour or curly dock, purslane, sorrel, wild chickory, plantain, wild lettuce, pepper plant and water cress.

However, it is imperative that you know your plants, pick only the young, tender plants and cook them properly.

Indian native foods