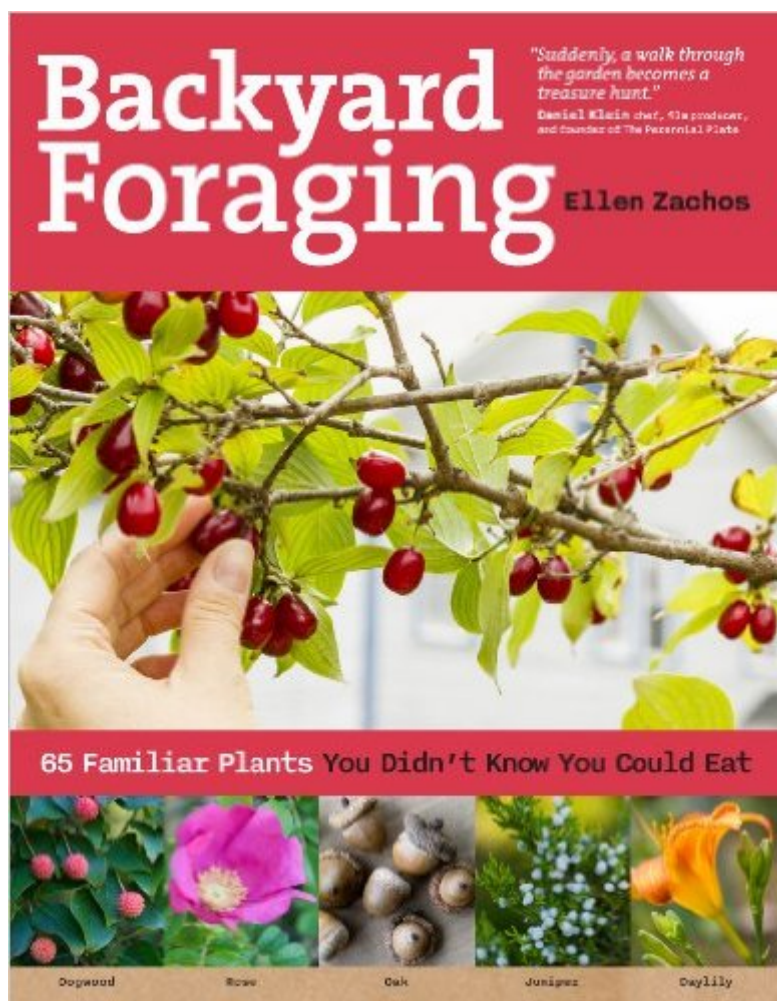


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# Backyard Foraging: 65 Familiar Plants You Didn't Know You Could Eat



## Synopsis

There's food growing everywhere! You'll be amazed by how many of the plants you see each day are actually nutritious edibles. Ideal for first-time foragers, this book features 70 edible weeds, flowers, mushrooms, and ornamental plants typically found in urban and suburban neighborhoods. Full-color photographs make identification easy, while tips on common plant locations, pesticides, pollution, and dangerous flora make foraging as safe and simple as stepping into your own backyard.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A top quality foraging book only comes out once every few years--and this is one of them. In the spirit of full disclosure, I confess that I got to review the book before publication, and that I have had the pleasure of foraging with the author. But those facts have not colored my opinion of the book--had I seen this for the first time at my local bookstore, I would have bought it immediately and then called my friends to recommend it. Here's why: The information is accurate. Ellen believes in researching what she writes, testing it in the laboratory of her own experience, and carefully explaining things in a clear, realistic, and intellectually honest manner. I have read the entire book and find nothing suspect. That means a lot to me. She gives each plant a two-page spread with 1-4 photos and enough text to explain the vitals of identifying, harvesting, and preparation without dallying on side-notes and stories like . . . ahem, some people I know. So the book is pleasantly space efficient. The photos are superb, generally showing each plant in a stage that is convenient for identification, as well as clearly demonstrating the edible part at the time that it is just right for

eating. The selection of plants is another special attribute of this book: it focuses on those edibles (both wild and cultivated) that most readers are likely to have access to in their own yards and neighborhoods. The plants covered fall mostly into three categories: ornamentals with mostly-ignored parts that happen to be edible, street trees, and weeds. While it is ridiculously popular for readers to complain that a wild food book doesn't contain this or that favorite plant, this book has a very thoughtful and useful selection that should be revealing to anybody. (I never knew you could eat young hosta leaves--all these years I've been missing out.) The introductory essays and advice are thoughtful and helpful. In short, if you are a gardener, a plant lover, or otherwise interested in wading carefully into foraging, this book is highly recommended. If you are a seasoned forager you'll probably find much new information as well. Here are the complaints I might anticipate about this excellent book: 1) It's not a field guide and is not inclusive of all or even most of the wild edibles in any region. That's not its purpose. Your favorite plant might not be in here (but your new favorite may). 2) It's short on technical descriptions of plants that a minority of more botanically savvy readers like. 3) It lacks more detailed information in some cases where it might be useful. These 3 items are not problems with the content; they are letting you know what the content IS NOT to help you understand if this is the book you're looking for. It most likely is. My only criticism of the book is that the photos of staghorn sumac show an unusual cut-leaf cultivar that some readers will rarely or never see, and this is likely to cause some confusion. In short: this is a great book.

I have tons of foraging books, and this one by far is the most beautiful. The author really has an eye for photographs and design. She covers with some depth, and covers plants I have not seen in any of my other books, like the Hosta. This is not a compilation book just copied from other sources. Her view is unique. 65 plants is not enough of course. I want more! But, I understand a book can only be so big. Please author, I hope you are working on volume 2! I will buy immediately... This is also the book I would buy as a present for someone brand new to foraging...

Backyard Foraging: 65 Familiar Plants You Didn't Know You Could Eat by Ellen Zachos is a collection of weeds as well as commonly grown garden and landscaping plants that are edible and not generally grown for food. It's written for people who have recently started foraging or who have been doing it only for a short time and would like to know more about what is edible and ways to prepare it. Full color photographs and lots of information written in an easy to follow conversational fashion make it a very accessible book for people who are just starting out. The plants cover a fairly

wide range of regional zones. It starts with learning how to identify plants to be safe and how to harvest in an ethical way, and then talks about how to harvest in a way that doesn't destroy the appearance of your garden and landscaping. It explains about young shoots, foraging flowers, nuts and fruits and digging for edible roots. It also has a great section on the tools you'll need to enjoy your harvest. Getting into the plants, each plant is described completely and has both the common name and the Latin name listed. The text explains how to harvest, and which parts of the plants are edible, and how they are best eaten. It will also show dangerous lookalikes and how to tell the difference. It's sectioned by types of edibles. The first section is leaves and stems that are edible. This includes things like chickweed and miner's lettuce that can be eaten raw in a salad as well as things like fern fiddleheads that are best cooked. The next section covers edible fruits and flowers. This covers crabapples and highbush cranberries as well as things like juniper berries, roses and prickly pears. Next up, nuts and seeds- I'm really impressed with the authors attention to detail about harvesting throughout the book, but this is where it's handiest. Nuts can be hard to harvest and she explains very well about how to harvest and prepare the nuts. After that, roots, tubers and rhizomes (generally the stuff that is underground)- there are plants you expect to find like wild garlic, but also a lot of flowers that have edible roots and bulbs. The last regular plant chapter is those superstar plants like my favorite dandelions that are almost all edible. It explains how each part of the plant that is edible might be eaten from root to flower. Then comes the easy to identify 5 safe mushrooms- everyone who forages and likes mushrooms should become knowledgeable about these. She explains the dangers of mushroom hunting and why mushrooms should always be cooked. Then she shows how to identify spored, gilled and toothed mushrooms. After that, she introduces the reader to 5 kinds of mushrooms that are very easy to identify and safe to eat. The last chapter covers cooking and recipes for your harvest. It discusses preservation techniques and has some great recipes for jams and jellies. It also has recipes for baked goods, soups and other dishes. It's very well indexed, and this a book that I happily recommend to anyone who is beginning at foraging and wildcrafting. I've been an active forager for years, and found some things in it that I'd forgotten about or that I didn't know. [I received a complimentary copy of the book to review on my craft blog- Don't Eat the Paste. I received no other compensation, and my review is my honest opinion of the product.]

I received this as an ARC and read through it. I really was impressed and pleasantly surprised with this book. I was expecting the same old plants that are always covered and the same old preparation methods. Or even worse, a book that is limited to plants that grow only on the west

coast. I've seen that a LOT. This book covered plants both familiar and obscure with plenty of pictures and tips to make identification easier. She also included plenty of recipes and neat new ideas on how to prepare these wild foods. Many of the things she said are edible are things I would never have thought to eat. I mean, I've harvested a lot of garlic mustard and nettles and lamb's quarters from my yard. Violets even, dandelions. The typical things. It never occurred to me that redbud buds or dahlia tubers are edible and apparently quite tasty. I'm really please to have been able to read this and even more pleased to recommend it. I don't let ARC's affect the way I review a book. I'm always honest in my reviews whether it makes the publisher happy or not. This was a slam dunk for Storey Publishing. Then again, I hardly ever dislike anything from them! :)

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