

Edible Plants

Leaf Identification: (helps identify plants)

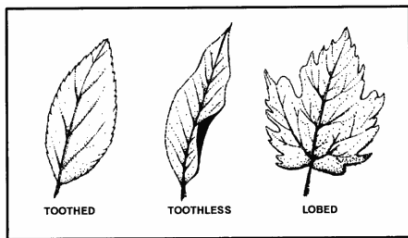


Figure 9-1. Leaf margins.

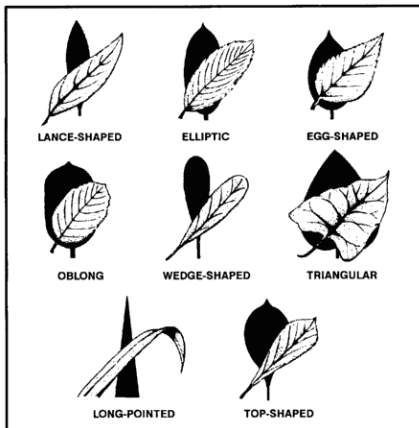


Figure 9-2. Leaf shapes.

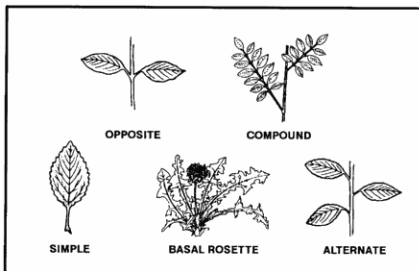


Figure 9-3. Leaf arrangements.

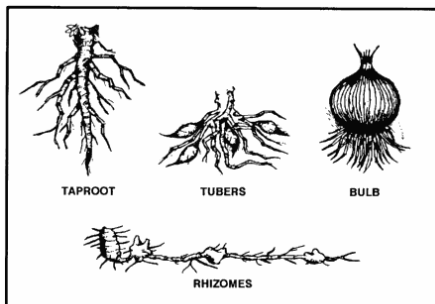


Figure 9-4. Root structures.

Unless Familiar with the plant, Avoid Plants with:

- Milky or discolored sap
- Beans, bulbs or seeds inside pods
- Bitter or soapy taste
- Spines, fine hairs or thorns
- Dill, carrot, parsnip or parsley like foliage
- "Almond" scent in woody parts and leaves
- Grain heads with pink, purplish or black spurs

- Three-leaved growth pattern

Preparation of Plant Food:

Although some plants or plant parts are edible raw, you must cook others to be *edible* or *palatable*.

Edible means that a plant or food will provide you with necessary nutrients.

Palatable means that it actually is pleasing to eat.

Many wild plants are edible but barely palatable. It is a good idea to learn to identify, prepare, and eat wild foods.

Methods used to improve the taste of plant food include soaking, boiling, cooking, or leaching. Leaching is done by crushing the food (for example, acorns), placing it in a strainer, and pouring boiling water through it or immersing it in running water.

Boil leaves, stems, and buds until tender, changing the water, if necessary, to remove any bitterness.

Boil, bake, or roast tubers and roots. Drying helps to remove caustic oxalates from some roots like those in the *Arum* family. Leach acorns in water, if necessary, to remove the bitterness. Some nuts, such as chestnuts, are good raw, but taste better roasted.

You can eat many grains and seeds raw until they mature. When hard or dry, you may have to boil or grind them into meal or flour.

The sap from many trees, such as maples, birches, walnuts, and sycamores, contains sugar. You may boil these saps down to a syrup for sweetening. It takes about 35 liters of maple sap to make one liter of maple syrup!

Parts of a plant that can be edible:

- Leaves
- Buds
- Roots
- "Fruit"
- Flowers
- Inside of Bark

Other Uses of Plants:

- Fire Tinder can be made from cattail fluff, cedar bark, hardened sap
- Rope can be made from stems of nettles, milkweeds, yucca plants, & some bark
- Insect repellents made by rubbing wild garlic or onion on your skin, or burning cattail seed hair fibers