Natural remedies for common ailments

People who are trying to live a simpler lifestyle, or maybe prepare for a time when stores and government services may not be available, often seek out natural remedies for common ailments. I have been educating myself about non-domesticated plants that are useful as food, for healing, and for supplying some of the vitamins and minerals basic to human life. Many of these are so commonly available as to be disparaged as “weeds.”

Here are a few of the ones I’ve found in my little corner of Tennessee…

**PLANTAIN**

The young, tender leaves are good to eat, but primarily I use the leaves any time they’re available to *relieve itching.* If you have an itchy insect bite or a skin irritation like poison ivy, just pluck a couple of leaves, chew them up, and apply them to the affected place. I also make an itch cream when Plantain is plentiful in the summertime, by crushing up Plantain leaves and Rosemary needles into a pot, add lard and melt over medium heat. Add a little melted beeswax (I just light a beeswax candle and allow about a tablespoon of wax to drip into a cup of lard). Melt together, stirring, then pour up into a jar and refrigerate. Apply whenever needed to relieve itchy skin.

**ALOE**

Aloe Vera is worth its weight in gold for *burns*. Aloe is not a natural plant in our area, but I always have a plant growing in a pot in my house to use for burns. It not only relieves the pain and generates rapid healing, but it also reduces scarring. Just break off one of the fleshy arms of the plant, slit it open, and rub the juice onto a small burn or lay it (cut side down) on a large burn and affix with a bandage. Severe burns should always be seen by a doctor, if one is available.

**PINE NEEDLES**

According to [**ediblewildfood.com :**](http://www.ediblewildfood.com/blog/2012/12/winter-teas/#sthash.0SdSutbd.dpuf)

Conifers … provide year round goodness that includes 136mg of vitamin C per one cup of pine needles. Pine needles also contain vitamins A, B1, B2, B3, calcium, iron, phosphorus, potassium, and sodium. If this isn’t enough, they also contain polyprenols, physterols and carotenoids and this makes pine tea a potent antioxidant health brew. The white pine (eastern and western) is so nutrient-rich it truly is a hard act to follow in the winter months for nutrients.

High in *Vitamin C*, pine needles can be made into a nice tea. Either boil the crushed needles for 15-20 minutes or pour boiling water over the needles and let steep for 10 minutes. Sweeten with honey or sugar, if available. Vitamin C is an essential vitamin that your body can not store up, so it needs to be consumed frequently. It should also be administered to relieve colds, congestion, and sinus problems. CAUTION: May possibly cause abortions in pregnant women.

**HUCKLEBERRY**

Huckleberry is a wild blueberry that grows close to the ground in hardwood forests on the mountains of the South. The roots may be boiled, then the water strained, cooled, and drunk throughout the day, to relieve symptoms from *diabetes*.

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**DANDELION**

According to [**self-healing-herbs.com:**](http://www.self-healing-herbs.com/dandelion.html)

Dandelion is a good source of potassium, sodium, iron, copper, calcium, phosphorus. The leaves contain a higher amount of vitamin A than carrots, also vitamins B, C and D and dietary fiber, which stimulates the natural processes of detoxification of the body.

Good for *liver* ailments, to increase *iron*, and to *reduce cholesterol* and *thin the blood,* Dandelion enjoys a reputation as a traditional spring tonic. Use the leaves, the flower, or the roots, either raw or cooked.

Another way to supplement iron in the diet is to cook with cast-iron pots, pans, and skillets. The cast-iron cookware contributes a residue of iron to the diet.

**LAMB’S QUARTERS**

One of our family’s favorite wild edibles is Lamb’s Quarters. The leaves may be picked fresh, sautéed in oil, and served without even seasoning them, because Lamb’s Quarters is high in sodium. In a survival situation, if *salt* rations are low, people could use this humble plant to provide the sodium their body needs. Lamb’s Quarters are a close cousin to Quinoa, so if you like using Quinoa seeds in your cooking, Lamb’s Quarters seeds can be substituted.

According to [**nutritiondata.self.com :**](http://nutritiondata.self.com/facts/vegetables-and-vegetable-products/2869/2#ixzz3F0joBO9m)

This food is low in Saturated Fat, and very low in Cholesterol. It is also a good source of Niacin, Folate, Iron, Magnesium and Phosphorus, and a very good source of Dietary Fiber, Protein, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin K, Thiamin, Riboflavin, Vitamin B6, Calcium, Potassium, Copper and Manganese.

This source points out that Lamb’s Quarters provides a “complete *protein*,” so the vegetarians in your family don’t have to do without!

If you decide to start foraging in your area for wild plants, take care to avoid putting anything in your body that you’re not sure about. Get a good reference book to help you identify plants. Two of my favorites are the Reader’s Digest classic, [*North American Wildlife*](http://www.amazon.com/North-American-Wildlife-Illustrated-Animals/dp/1606524917/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1412272386&sr=1-1&keywords=North+American+Wildlife)*,* and [*Edible Wild Plants*](http://www.amazon.com/Edible-Wild-Plants-American-Natural/dp/1402767153/ref%3Dsr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1412272448&sr=1-3&keywords=Edible+Wild+Plants), by Elias and Dykeman. And Peterson’s [*Field Guides*](http://www.amazon.com/Field-Guide-Edible-Wild-Plants/dp/039592622X/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1412272488&sr=1-1&keywords=Edible+Wild+Plants) are always a good choice for identifying plants.

*DISCLAIMER: I am not a healthcare professional and make no claim to administer medical care or advice. What I have written here is for information purposes only.*

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