

Preview: the calendar is still being tested; the finished calendar is print only.

A Forager's Year

Wild food, month by month, in and around Washington, D.C.



JANUARY



FEBRUARY



MARCH



APRIL



MAY



JUNE



JULY



AUGUST



SEPTEMBER



OCTOBER



NOVEMBER



DECEMBER

About this calendar

[START HERE](#)

HOW EACH MONTH WORKS

The top page is the plant of the month: one plant that is easy to identify, easy to find in the wild around the DC area, and hard to buy in a shop, with a full description. In December two plants share the page, one of them patchier to find.

The bottom page shows every other plant at its best that month. Plants that are around but before or past their peak are listed by name under the plant of the month, with the month they peak.

In January, February and December few plants peak, so the bottom page shows every other plant in season instead.

Nutrition: how much of a day's needs one standard serving provides, using the FDA's daily values and serving sizes. The FDA calls 20% or more 'high' and 10–19% a 'good source'. The website shows every figure and its source.

FIND OUT MORE

Every plant has a number and a QR code. Scan the code with a phone camera to open that plant's full page: how to tell it from lookalikes, where it grows, how to use and keep it, and the sources behind every line.

BEFORE YOU EAT ANYTHING

Eat a wild plant only when you are certain what it is. This calendar is not an identification guide: the drawings are botanical illustrations, most from 1913, chosen for their beauty. Check the plant's full page every time: the marks on its tile cover lookalikes, toxic parts, cooking and spray risk, but not allergies, handling hazards or how much to eat. Mushrooms and other fungi are left out on purpose: mistaking a poisonous mushroom for an edible one can be deadly.

WHERE YOU MAY PICK

Rules differ from park to park. Rock Creek Park, GW Parkway sites (incl. Great Falls VA, Theodore Roosevelt Island), the National Mall, Montgomery and Prince George's parks, Maryland state parks, and Fairfax and Arlington parks prohibit picking. National Park Service land allows only the fruits, berries and nuts each park lists, and Virginia state parks only edible fruits, berries and nuts: never greens, roots or flowers. In DC city parks picking is not authorized, and NOVA Parks and Alexandria require written permission or a permit. On private land, ask the owner. Scan a plant's code for where it may be picked and how much.

How to read a plant

Every tile follows the same pattern



56 Pawpaw

ripe fruit (pulp only)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat



EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID **Beginner**

1. **Number and name** Numbers run through the year by when each plant peaks (or starts, if it has no peak). The number is the same on the website.
2. **The part you pick** Some plants appear more than once, one tile per part.
3. **Find** How easy it is to find around DC, from Everywhere to Elusive.
4. **Effort** From Grab & eat to Project. On the busiest months (January, February, October and December) the tiles show the Find and Effort dots without their words; the key at the foot of the page gives the words.
5. **ID** Beginner or Careful: how hard it is to pick safely.
6. **Origin** Native, non-native, or mixed (the harvest covers both). Stars mark plants on invasive plant lists: ★★ high on Virginia's list (ranked by harm to natural areas) or on Maryland's prohibited invasive plant list, ★★ medium, ★ low on Virginia's list, ☆ only on other lists. Park rules still apply.
7. **Safety marks** Deadly lookalike, toxic lookalike, toxic parts, cook first, spray risk.
8. **Uses** What it is good for, from salads to roasted nuts.
9. **Circle color** What you pick, one color for each kind of part: see the key below.
10. **Season** Pale months: in season. Dark months: at its peak. Outlined: this month. The plant of the month is at its peak when possible. In January, February, August and December no easy, safe plant peaks, so that month's plant is one still in season.
11. **QR code** Scan it with a phone camera for the plant's full page.

Find ●○○○ Everywhere ●●○○ Common in the right habitat ●●●○ Patchy ●●●● Elusive **Effort** ●○○○ Grab & eat ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep ●●●○ Real work ●●●● Project

Season ■ in season ■ peak 🧠 Deadly lookalike 🚫 Toxic lookalike ⚠️ Toxic parts 🔥 Cook first 🚒 Spray risk

Circle ● Fruit ● Nut & seed ● Leaves & tender stems, young shoots ● Flowers, buds & pollen ● Roots, bulbs & tubers ● Sap

🥬 Eat raw / salad 🍲 Cooked vegetable / soup 🍷 Pesto & sauces 🍰 Baking & desserts 🍯 Jam & jelly 🍷 Syrup & cordial 🍵 Tea 🍹 Juice & drinks
 🍷 Wine & spirits 🥒 Pickles 🧂 Spice & seasoning 🌾 Flour 🥛 Nut milk & oil ☕ Coffee substitute ☀️ Dried fruit & leather 🥜 Roasted nuts

No. 64

Common hackberry

Celtis occidentalis

ripe fruit (thin flesh; whole fruit traditionally pounded)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID **Beginner**

NATIVE  Eat raw / salad  Jam & jelly  Spice & seasoning  Dried fruit & leather

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

A native tree of the hemp family (formerly placed in the elm family) with warty, corky-ridged bark and lopsided, toothed leaves that often carry little nipple galls. It bears pea-size drupes, borne singly, that ripen orange-brown to deep purple. They have a thin layer of sweet, date-like flesh over a large hard seed. Mostly a nibble, but one that lasts into winter.

IS IT RIPE?

Towson University (Maryland) says the fruit typically ripens in September and can be foraged through the winter. USDA NRCS and the Forest Service give September to October ripening, with fruit staying on the tree for several months, sometimes until spring, and NC State agrees. Missouri Conservation describes the berries hanging on the tree all winter as a nibble for hikers. Ripe fruit is deep purple (Towson; NC State).

WHERE TO LOOK

Potomac floodplains (logged most on the C&O Canal towpath and along Four Mile Run) and planted as a tough street tree; the C&O Canal allows edible fruits generally but sets no limit for hackberry, so it is ambiguous there (ask the park); otherwise pick in Virginia state parks or from private trees with permission.

WAYS TO USE IT

- eat raw as a trail nibble (thin, sweet, date-like flesh over a hard seed; Towson Glen Arboretum)
- jelly and preserves (NC State)
- traditional Native American use: the whole fruit, seed included, pounded into a storable food; also used dried as a seasoning (Wildflower Center)

SAFETY

No toxicity is reported in the sources checked (NC State; Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center). The seed is very hard, so take care with your teeth unless you are grinding it.



NUTRITION % of daily value in a 140 g serving of whole fruit with its stone

- **Calcium** 1051%, high (Wainio & Forbes 1941); unconfirmed: one analysis, and it would be the highest of 105 raw fruits in USDA's database
- **Magnesium** 127%, high (Wainio & Forbes 1941); unconfirmed: one analysis, and it would be the highest of 103 raw fruits in USDA's database
- **Phosphorus** 19%, good source (Wainio & Forbes 1941); unconfirmed: one analysis, and it would be the highest of 105 raw fruits in USDA's database
- Every source and sample, and what was searched: scan the code

Drawing: Britton & Brown, *Illustrated Flora* (1913)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Legal to pick: Virginia state parks, no set limit



In season in January

18 plants · scan a code for each plant's full page

 1 Maple <i>sap (boiled to syrup)</i> FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●●●● ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 2 Black walnut <i>sap (boiled to syrup)</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●●● ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 3 Chicory <i>taproot</i> FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE   J F M A M J J A S O N D	 4 Common chickweed <i>tender stem tips, leaves and flowers</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Careful NON-NATIVE ★★       J F M A M J J A S O N D	 6 Field garlic / wild onion <i>leaves (green tops), used like chives</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Careful MIXED ☆      J F M A M J J A S O N D	 7 Garlic mustard <i>leaves (first-year rosettes and young second-year leaves); roots and seeds also edible</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE ★★★      J F M A M J J A S O N D
 8 Hairy bittercress <i>leaves, tender stems and flowers</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE   J F M A M J J A S O N D	 9 Henbit <i>leaves, stems and flowers (tender tops)</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE    J F M A M J J A S O N D	 10 Spicebush <i>twigs, young leaves and early flowers, for tea (berries covered separately)</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 15 Purple deadnettle <i>young tops and leaves (flowers too)</i> FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE    J F M A M J J A S O N D	 65 Crabapple <i>ripe fruit (flesh; discard cores and seeds)</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner MIXED    J F M A M J J A S O N D	 70 Dandelion <i>taproot</i> FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE     J F M A M J J A S O N D
 72 American persimmon <i>ripe fruit</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NATIVE      J F M A M J J A S O N D	 74 Carolina rose <i>ripe hips</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NATIVE    J F M A M J J A S O N D	 75 Hawthorn <i>ripe fruit ('haws'; flesh only)</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NATIVE     J F M A M J J A S O N D	 79 Jerusalem artichoke <i>tubers</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NATIVE    J F M A M J J A S O N D	 80 Multiflora rose <i>ripe hips</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE ★★★       J F M A M J J A S O N D	 81 Orange daylily <i>small, firm root tubers</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE ★★★   J F M A M J J A S O N D

No. 10

Spicebush

Lindera benzoin

twigs, young leaves and early flowers, for tea (berries covered separately)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID **Beginner**

(NATIVE) ☕ Tea

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

A native understory shrub whose smooth, light-green, oval leaves, twigs and bark smell spicy when scratched or crushed. Tiny yellow flower clusters line the bare branches in early spring before leaf-out.

WHEN TO PICK

Flowers and young leaves make the best tea in spring: spicebush blooms around DC from early March, peaking in the second half of March (iNaturalist; Virginia Wildflowers), and the Missouri Department of Conservation’s Wild Edibles book gives March–May. Twigs and bark are also named as tea material (Missouri Department of Conservation; Lehigh Gap Nature Center). No source gives a season for them, but they

are on the shrub all year, so they are the option outside spring; the June–February window is an estimate on that basis.

WHERE TO LOOK

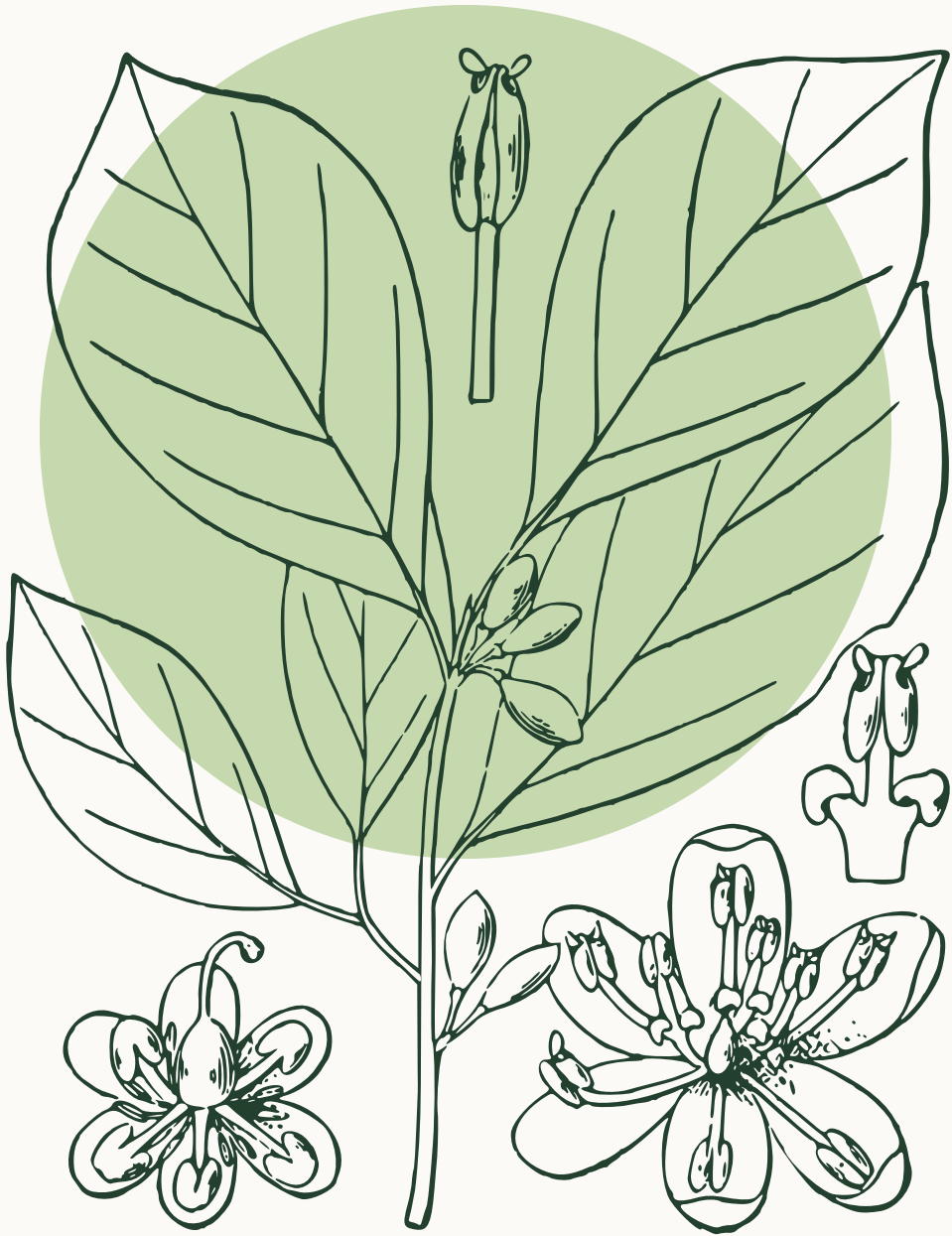
Moist floodplain understory in Rock Creek Park and along the C&O Canal, where you can learn it but not pick it; take twigs from private woodlots with permission.

WAYS TO USE IT

- twig tea (chop twigs, steep about 1 tsp per cup for a few minutes)
- flower and young-leaf tea

SAFETY

No toxicity noted in sources. Use only twig tips and prune sparingly. Confirm the spicy smell; several other shrubs have similar oval leaves but no aroma.



NUTRITION

- No nutrient measurements found for this harvest
- Every source and sample, and what was searched: scan the code

Drawing: Britton & Brown, *Illustrated Flora* (1913)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Legal to pick: no park checked allows it; pick only on private land with the owner’s permission.



In season in February

19 plants · scan a code for each plant's full page

 1 Maple <i>sap (boiled to syrup)</i> FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●●●● ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 2 Black walnut <i>sap (boiled to syrup)</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●●● ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 3 Chicory <i>taproot</i> FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 4 Common chickweed <i>tender stem tips, leaves and flowers</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Careful NON-NATIVE ★★   J F M A M J J A S O N D	 5 Dandelion <i>young leaves (rosettes), best before flowering</i> FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 6 Field garlic / wild onion <i>leaves (green tops), used like chives</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Careful MIXED ☆  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 7 Garlic mustard <i>leaves (first-year rosettes and young second-year leaves); roots and seeds also edible</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE ★★★   J F M A M J J A S O N D
 8 Hairy bittercress <i>leaves, tender stems and flowers</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 9 Henbit <i>leaves, stems and flowers (tender tops)</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 12 Cleavers <i>young shoots and leaves (cooked, or very young tips raw); seeds roasted as a coffee substitute</i> FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 15 Purple deadnettle <i>young tops and leaves (flowers too)</i> FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 64 Common hackberry <i>ripe fruit (thin flesh; whole fruit traditionally pounded)</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 65 Crabapple <i>ripe fruit (flesh; discard cores and seeds)</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●●○ ID Beginner MIXED  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 70 Dandelion <i>taproot</i> FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D
	 74 Carolina rose <i>ripe hips</i> FIND ●●●○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 75 Hawthorn <i>ripe fruit ('haws'; flesh only)</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●●○ ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 79 Jerusalem artichoke <i>tubers</i> FIND ●●●○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 80 Multiflora rose <i>ripe hips</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE ★★★   J F M A M J J A S O N D	 81 Orange daylily <i>small, firm root tubers</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE ★★★  J F M A M J J A S O N D	



No. 12

Cleavers

Galium aparine

young shoots and leaves (cooked, or very young tips raw); seeds roasted as a coffee substitute

FIND ●○○○ Everywhere

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID **Beginner**

NATIVE Eat raw / salad Cooked vegetable / soup Coffee substitute

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

A sprawling annual whose weak square stems and narrow leaves in whorls of 6-8 are covered in tiny hooked bristles that make it stick to clothing. Tiny white four-petaled flowers in spring give way to small bristly burr-like fruits. Young leaves are eaten raw or cooked.

WHEN TO PICK

Pick young, tender tips before flowering. Around DC cleavers comes up in numbers from late February and starts flowering in mid-April (iNaturalist; Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center gives April bloom); afterwards the plants get stringy and burry. The seeds for roasting form from late April into June (iNaturalist). Penn State Extension notes a second flush of seedlings in late summer and fall.

WHERE TO LOOK

Sprawling over shrubs on floodplain and woods edges (Rock Creek Park, Four Mile Run, the C&O towpath, all no-picking), and a weed of shady landscape beds in home gardens (Penn State); pick from your own beds, hedges and private woodlots with permission.

WAYS TO USE IT

- cooked as a potherb
- very young tips in salads
- roasted seeds as a coffee substitute

SAFETY

No toxicity noted in sources. The hooked bristles can irritate sensitive skin (Penn State); use only very young tips raw (Penn State; MDC), and cook older shoots.

NUTRITION

- No measurements found of the fresh greens you eat: 1 analysis was left out (dried samples, other parts, or the species, part or basis not clear)
- Every source and sample, and what was searched: scan the code

Drawing: Britton & Brown, *Illustrated Flora* (1913)



Legal to pick: no park checked allows it; pick only on private land with the owner's permission.



ALSO AROUND THIS MONTH with its peak month

- Burdock NOV Chicory (roots, bulbs & tubers) NO PEAK Common blue violet (flowers, buds & pollen) APR Common blue violet (leaves & tender stems) APR Dandelion (flowers, buds & pollen) APR
Dandelion (roots, bulbs & tubers) OCT Eastern redbud APR Field garlic / wild onion (roots, bulbs & tubers) APR, JUN Japanese knotweed APR Maple FEB Stinging nettle APR

At their best in March

14 plants · scan a code for each plant's full page

 2 Black walnut <i>sap (boiled to syrup)</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●●●● Project ID Beginner (NATIVE) 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D	 4 Common chickweed <i>tender stem tips, leaves and flowers</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Careful (NON-NATIVE ★★) 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D	 5 Dandelion <i>young leaves (rosettes), best before flowering</i> FIND ●○○○ Everywhere EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Beginner (NON-NATIVE) 🍷 🍷 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D	 6 Field garlic / wild onion <i>leaves (green tops), used like chives</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Careful (MIXED ☆) 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D	 7 Garlic mustard <i>leaves (first-year rosettes and young second-year leaves); roots and seeds also edible</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep ID Beginner (NON-NATIVE ★★★) 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D
 8 Hairy bittercress <i>leaves, tender stems and flowers</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Beginner (NON-NATIVE) 🍷 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D	 9 Henbit <i>leaves, stems and flowers (tender tops)</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Beginner (NON-NATIVE) 🍷 🍷 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D	 10 Spicebush <i>twigs, young leaves and early flowers, for tea (berries covered separately)</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep ID Beginner (NATIVE) 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D	 11 Chicory <i>young basal leaves</i> FIND ●○○○ Everywhere EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Beginner (NON-NATIVE) 🍷 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D	 13 Curly dock <i>young, tightly curled leaves (and early spring stalks)</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep ID Beginner (NON-NATIVE ★) 🍷 🍷 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D
 14 Orange daylily <i>young shoots (3-8 in)</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep ID Careful (NON-NATIVE ★★★) 🍷 🔥 🍷 🗑️ J F M A M J J A S O N D	 15 Purple deadnettle <i>young tops and leaves (flowers too)</i> FIND ●○○○ Everywhere EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Beginner (NON-NATIVE) 🍷 🍷 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D	 16 Ramps <i>leaves only (one leaf per plant); bulbs should be left in the ground</i> FIND ●●●● Elusive EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep ID Careful (NATIVE) 🍷 🧠 🍷 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D	 81 Orange daylily <i>small, firm root tubers</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep ID Beginner (NON-NATIVE ★★★) 🔥 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D	



No. 19

Eastern redbud

Cercis canadensis
flowers and flower buds

FIND ●○○○ Everywhere
EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat
ID **Beginner**

(NATIVE) Eat raw / salad Cooked vegetable / soup Baking & desserts Jam & jelly Syrup & cordial Pickles

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

A small native understory tree that blooms on bare, zig-zag branches (even on the trunk) with clusters of small pink-magenta pea-like flowers before its heart-shaped leaves appear. The flowers are mildly sweet and taste like peas.

WHEN TO PICK

Redbud blooms on bare branches before the leaves. Around DC flowering starts in late March, is heaviest in early and mid April, and is mostly over by the end of April (iNaturalist); University of Maryland Extension gives April-May for Maryland, so cooler sites and late years run into early May. The Missouri Dept. of Conservation’s wild edibles book also pickles the young pods.

WHERE TO LOOK

Heavily planted in yards and streetscapes and wild on woods edges (Rock Creek Park, the C&O towpath); parks ban picking flowers, so ask owners of yard and street trees.

WAYS TO USE IT

- salad topper
- pickled flowers
- fritters
- muffins and pancakes
- jelly or syrup

SAFETY

No toxicity noted. Don’t confuse with ornamental pink-flowering trees whose flowers are not known to be edible; redbud is unmistakable by its pea-shaped flowers on bare wood.

NUTRITION per 100 g (the FDA sets no serving for flowers)
– **Vitamin C** 69–82 mg, 1.3–1.5 times as much as raw oranges, weight for weight (Zennie & Ogzewalla 1977; oranges: USDA)
– Every source and sample, and what was searched: scan the code

Drawing: Britton & Brown, *Illustrated Flora* (1913)

J F M **A** M J J A S O N D

Legal to pick: no park checked allows it; pick only on private land with the owner’s permission.



ALSO AROUND THIS MONTH with its peak month

Black walnut (sap) FEB Burdock NOV Cattail (young shoots) MAY Chicory (roots, bulbs & tubers) NO PEAK Chicory (leaves & tender stems) MAR Cleavers MAR Curly dock MAR Dandelion (leaves & tender stems) MAR
Field garlic / wild onion (leaves & tender stems) MAR Garlic mustard MAR Hairy bittercress MAR Japanese honeysuckle MAY Lamb’s quarters MAY Orange daylily (young shoots) MAR Spicebush (leaves & tender stems) MAR
Wild mint JUL Wood sorrel MAY

At their best in April

15 plants · scan a code for each plant's full page

 4 Common chickweed <i>tender stem tips, leaves and flowers</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Careful (NON-NATIVE ★★) ☹️ ⚠️ 🍵 🍲 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D  9 Henbit <i>leaves, stems and flowers (tender tops)</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Beginner (NON-NATIVE) ⚠️ 🍵 🍲 J F M A M J J A S O N D  15 Purple deadnettle <i>young tops and leaves (flowers too)</i> FIND ●○○○ Everywhere EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Beginner (NON-NATIVE) ⚠️ 🍵 🍲 J F M A M J J A S O N D  16 Ramps <i>leaves only (one leaf per plant); bulbs should be left in the ground</i> FIND ●●●● Elusive EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep ID Careful (NATIVE) ⚠️ 🍵 🍲 J F M A M J J A S O N D  17 Common blue violet <i>flowers</i> FIND ●○○○ Everywhere EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Beginner (NATIVE) ⚠️ 🍵 🍲 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D
 18 Common blue violet <i>young leaves</i> FIND ●○○○ Everywhere EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Careful (NATIVE) ☹️ ⚠️ 🍵 🍲 J F M A M J J A S O N D  20 Field garlic / wild onion <i>underground bulbs and the aerial bulblets on field garlic flower heads</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep ID Careful (MIXED ☆) ☹️ ⚠️ 🍵 🍲 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D  21 Japanese knotweed <i>young shoots (roughly 6-12 in, before leaves unfurl)</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep ID Beginner (NON-NATIVE ★★★) ⚠️ 🍵 🍲 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D  22 Plantain <i>young leaves (seeds also edible)</i> FIND ●○○○ Everywhere EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Beginner (MIXED) ⚠️ 🍵 🍲 J F M A M J J A S O N D  23 Sheep sorrel <i>leaves</i> FIND ●●●○ Patchy EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Beginner (NON-NATIVE ★★) ⚠️ 🍵 🍲 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D
 24 Stinging nettle <i>young shoots and top leaves (cooked)</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep ID Beginner (MIXED ★★★) 🔥 🍵 🍲 🍷 J F M A M J J A S O N D  25 Dandelion <i>flower heads (yellow florets; green bracts removed for sweets)</i> FIND ●○○○ Everywhere EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Beginner (NON-NATIVE) ⚠️ 🍵 🍲 🍷 🍹 J F M A M J J A S O N D  26 Linden <i>young leaves and leaf buds</i> FIND ●○○○ Everywhere EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Beginner (NATIVE) 🍵 J F M A M J J A S O N D  27 Black locust <i>flowers only (all other parts are toxic)</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat ID Careful (NATIVE) ☹️ ⚠️ 🍵 🍲 🍷 🍹 J F M A M J J A S O N D  28 Wood nettle <i>young shoots and top leaves (cooked)</i> FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep ID Beginner (NATIVE) 🔥 🍵 J F M A M J J A S O N D



No. 35

Serviceberry

Amelanchier spp. (*A. arborea*, *A. canadensis*, *A. laevis*, *A. x grandiflora*)
ripe fruit

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID **Beginner**

NATIVE Eat raw / salad Baking & desserts Jam & jelly Syrup & cordial Juice & drinks Dried fruit & leather

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

A small native tree that is one of the first to bloom in spring, with clouds of white flowers. The fruits are small, blueberry-like pomes that turn from green to red and then to deep purple or nearly black. Ripe fruit is sweet and juicy, like a cross between blueberries and cherries, and slightly nutty; some describe hints of peach or almond.

IS IT RIPE?

Berries do not all ripen at once, so return every few days (Casey Trees); birds take the sweetest berries quickly (Iowa State). Pick plump, dark purple fruit that comes off with a gentle tug.

WHERE TO LOOK

Mostly planted street trees and trees in public parks (Casey Trees' map helps); wild ones grow on wooded slopes along the C&O Canal and in Glencarlyn Park, but serviceberry is

ambiguous on the C&O Canal (not on its limits list; ask the park) and Arlington parks ban picking.

WAYS TO USE IT

- eat fresh off the tree
- pies, muffins, cobblers, smoothies (use in place of blueberries)
- jam, jelly, syrup
- freeze for later
- dried, used like raisins (UAF)

SAFETY

None notable in the sources checked. Skip fruit deformed by cedar-quince rust: UMD Extension says this fungus can make the fruit inedible for people. As with any street tree, wash the fruit and avoid trees beside heavy traffic or recently sprayed landscapes.

NUTRITION % of daily value in a 140 g serving

- **Vitamin C** 5–176%: the analyses differ (Kuklina et al. 2017, 64–67%, ascorbic acid only; Donno et al. 2016, 5% ascorbic acid alone, 176% counting dehydroascorbic acid, the other form of vitamin C)
- **Magnesium** 13%, good source (Wainio & Forbes 1941); unconfirmed: one analysis, and it would be among the 5 highest of 103 raw fruits in USDA’s database
- Every source and sample, and what was searched: scan the code

Drawing: Britton & Brown, *Illustrated Flora* (1913)

J F M A **M** J J A S O N D

Legal to pick: Virginia state parks, no set limit



ALSO AROUND THIS MONTH with its peak month

- Cattail (flowers, buds & pollen) JUN Common blue violet (flowers, buds & pollen) APR Common blue violet (leaves & tender stems) APR Common chickweed MAR Dandelion (flowers, buds & pollen) APR Eastern redbud APR
- Field garlic / wild onion (leaves & tender stems) MAR Field garlic / wild onion (roots, bulbs & tubers) APR, JUN Henbit MAR Japanese knotweed APR Linden (leaves & tender stems) APR Linden (flowers, buds & pollen) JUN
- Plantain APR Purple deadnettle MAR Ramps MAR Red mulberry JUN Sheep sorrel APR Spicebush (leaves & tender stems) MAR Stinging nettle APR Wild mint JUL Wood nettle APR

At their best in May

9 plants · scan a code for each plant's full page



27 **Black locust**
flowers only (all other parts are toxic)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID **Careful**

NATIVE ☹️ ⚠️ 🍴 🍲 🍷 🍺 🍻

J F M **A** **M** J J A S O N D



29 **Cattail**
young shoots / inner core of the stalk

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID **Careful**

NATIVE ☹️ 🍴 🍲 🍷

J F M **A** **M** J J A S O N D



30 **Lamb's quarters**
young plants and tender tips (seeds also edible)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID **Beginner**

NON-NATIVE 🍴 🍲 🍷

J F M **A** **M** J J A S O N D



31 **Wood sorrel**
leaves, flowers and green seed pods

FIND ●○○○ Everywhere

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID **Beginner**

NATIVE 🍴 🍲 🍷

J F M **A** **M** J J A S O N D



32 **Japanese honeysuckle**
flower nectar (and flowers); NOT the berries

FIND ●○○○ Everywhere

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID **Careful**

NON-NATIVE ★★★ ☹️ ⚠️ 🍴 🍲 🍷

J F M **A** **M** J J A S O N D



33 **American elderberry**
flower clusters (umbel-like cymes)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID **Careful**

NATIVE ☹️ ☹️ ⚠️ ⚠️ 🍴 🍲 🍷 🍺

J F M A **M** **J** **J** A S O N D



34 **Sassafras**
young leaves, dried and ground for filé powder (also young leaves and twig tips for tea/flavoring)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID **Beginner**

NATIVE ⚠️ 🍴 🍲 🍷

J F M A **M** **J** J A S O N D



36 **White mulberry**
ripe fruit

FIND ●○○○ Everywhere

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID **Beginner**

NON-NATIVE ★ ⚠️ 🍴 🍲 🍷 ☀️

J F M A **M** **J** J A S O N D



37 **Wild strawberry**
ripe berries

FIND ●●○○ Patchy

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID **Beginner**

NATIVE 🍴 🍲 🍷

J F M A **M** **J** J A S O N D

No. 36

White mulberry

Morus alba

ripe fruit

FIND ●○○○ Everywhere

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID **Beginner**

NON-NATIVE ★ ⚠ Toxic parts ☒ Spray risk 🍴 Eat raw / salad 🍰 Baking & desserts 🥫 Jam & jelly 🍷 Syrup & cordial ☀ Dried fruit & leather

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

A fast-growing Asian tree with glossy, variably lobed leaves. The fruit looks like a small blackberry and, despite the name, ripens white, pink, lavender, red or purple-black depending on the tree. Flavor varies a lot from tree to tree: some are very sweet, others dry and tasteless (Ohio State).

IS IT RIPE?

Fruit color varies by tree, so judge ripeness by plumpness, full color for that tree, and how easily the fruit drops, not by darkness. Avoid bright red or green berries (Natural History Society of Maryland).

WHERE TO LOOK

Look for purple-stained pavement along streets and sidewalks, fence rows and trail edges; it is logged most in Rock Creek Park, along Four Mile Run and on the Mount Vernon Trail,

all no-picking, so ask owners of yard trees or try Virginia state parks.

WAYS TO USE IT

- eat fresh within a day of picking
- jam, jelly, pies, tarts and cobblers
- syrup
- freeze, or dry and use like raisins in breads, cookies or puddings (NC State)

SAFETY

Eat only fully ripe fruit. Unripe berries and the milky sap found in every part of the tree are mildly toxic and can cause stomach upset and hallucinations (NC State; Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center). The sap can also irritate skin. Wash the fruit, because trees over sidewalks and roads collect grime. NC State adds that the milky latex in the leaves and young shoots is mildly toxic.



NUTRITION % of daily value in a 140 g serving

- **Vitamin C** 4–47%: 6 analyses differ widely; basis inferred by AI for Akin et al. 2016; Balik et al. 2019; Gundogdu et al. 2018
- 19 more analyses left out (dried samples, other parts, or the species, part or basis not clear)
- Every source and sample, and what was searched: scan the code

Drawing: Britton & Brown, *Illustrated Flora* (1913)

J F M A **M J** J A S O N D

Legal to pick: Virginia state parks, no set limit



ALSO AROUND THIS MONTH with its peak month

Blackberry & dewberry **JUL** Cattail (young shoots) **MAY** Chicory (roots, bulbs & tubers) **NO PEAK** Common purslane **JUL** Japanese honeysuckle **MAY** Plantain **APR** Sassafras **MAY** Sheep sorrel **APR**
Spicebush (leaves & tender stems) **MAR** Wild blueberry **JUL** Wild mint **JUL** Wild strawberry **MAY** Wood sorrel **MAY**

At their best in June

10 plants · scan a code for each plant's full page



20 **Field garlic / wild onion**

underground bulbs and the aerial bulblets on field garlic flower heads

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID **Careful**



MIXED ☆

J F M A M **J** J A S O N D



30 **Lamb's quarters**

young plants and tender tips (seeds also edible)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID **Beginner**



NON-NATIVE

J F M A M **J** J A S O N D



33 **American elderberry**

flower clusters (umbel-like cymes)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID **Careful**



NATIVE

J F M A M **J** J A S O N D



35 **Serviceberry**

ripe fruit

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID **Beginner**



NATIVE

J F M A M **J** J A S O N D



38 **Black raspberry**

ripe berries

FIND ●●●○ Patchy

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID **Beginner**



NATIVE

J F M A M **J** J A S O N D



39 **Cattail**

immature green flower spikes and yellow pollen

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID **Beginner**



NATIVE

J F M A M **J** J A S O N D



40 **Linden**

flower clusters with their papery bract, for tea

FIND ●○○○ Everywhere

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID **Beginner**



NATIVE

J F M A M **J** J A S O N D



41 **Orange daylily**

unopened flower buds, open flowers and spent (wilted) flowers

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID **Beginner**



NON-NATIVE ★★★

J F M A M **J** J A S O N D



42 **Red mulberry**

ripe fruit

FIND ●●●● Elusive

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID **Beginner**



NATIVE

J F M A M **J** J A S O N D



43 **Wineberry**

ripe berries

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID **Beginner**



NON-NATIVE ★★★

J F M A M **J** J A S O N D



No. 43

Wineberry

Rubus phoenicolasius
ripe berries

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID **Beginner**

NON-NATIVE ★★★

☞ Spray risk

🍃 Eat raw / salad

🍰 Baking & desserts

🍹 Jam & jelly

🍷 Juice & drinks

☀️ Dried fruit & leather

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

An Asian bramble with arching canes up to about 9 ft long, covered in dense, sticky, reddish hairs rather than stout thorns. Each leaf has three broad, toothed leaflets with silvery-white undersides. The fruit develops inside a hairy husk (calyx) that opens as it ripens, and the berry turns a bright, glossy red. It is sweet-tart like a raspberry, pulls off easily, and leaves a yellowish cone behind.

IS IT RIPE?

Ripe berries are bright, clear red and come off with a gentle tug, leaving a yellowish cone behind (Natural History Society of Maryland). They keep only a day or two, so eat, cook, freeze or dehydrate them quickly (Natural History Society of Maryland).

WHERE TO LOOK

Thickets along woods edges and trails; pick freely on the C&O Canal towpath (no limit), while Rock Creek Park and Wheaton

Regional Park, two of the three places where it is logged most, ban picking (the National Zoo, the other, is a federal facility: ask first); Wolf Trap allows 'raspberries' but does not name wineberry, so ask there.

WAYS TO USE IT

- eat fresh
- pie
- cobbler
- jam/preserves
- sorbet
- cocktails
- freeze or dehydrate

SAFETY

None notable. No toxic lookalikes among the red raspberry-type brambles. The red hairy canes and the husk around the fruit identify it. Canes carry small prickles.

NUTRITION

- No nutrient measurements found for this fruit
- Every source and sample, and what was searched: scan the code

Drawing: L. H. Bailey, *Standard Cyclopedia of Horticulture* (1914–17)

J F M A M **J J** A S O N D

Legal to pick: C&O Canal, no limit



ALSO AROUND THIS MONTH with its peak month

American elderberry (flowers, buds & pollen) MAY Black raspberry JUN Cattail (flowers, buds & pollen) JUN Chicory (roots, bulbs & tubers) NO PEAK Field garlic / wild onion (roots, bulbs & tubers) APR, JUN Ground cherry AUG Japanese honeysuckle MAY Lamb's quarters MAY Linden (flowers, buds & pollen) JUN Orange daylily (flowers, buds & pollen) JUN Plantain APR Red mulberry JUN Spicebush (leaves & tender stems) MAR Sumac AUG Wood sorrel MAY

At their best in July

8 plants · scan a code for each plant's full page



44

Common purslane

leaves and tender stems (flowers and seeds also edible)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID Careful

NON-NATIVE

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45

Wild mint

leaves and tender tops

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID Beginner

MIXED

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46

Blackberry & dewberry

ripe berries

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID Beginner

MIXED ☆

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47

Wild blueberry

ripe berries

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID Beginner

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48

American elderberry

ripe berries (cooked)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●●○ Real work

ID Careful

NATIVE

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49

Black cherry

ripe fruit flesh (pits removed)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID Careful

NATIVE

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50

Black huckleberry

ripe berries

FIND ●●●○ Patchy

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID Beginner

NATIVE

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51

Cornelian cherry

ripe fruit (flesh; discard pit)

FIND ●●●○ Patchy

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID Careful

NON-NATIVE

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- NUTRITION** % of daily value in a 140 g serving
- **Vitamin C** 3–218%: 10 analyses differ widely; basis inferred by AI for Boyacı et al. 2023
 - **Dietary fiber** 24–34%, high (Mazilu & Cosmulescu 2023; Tanaka & Tanaka 2001); basis inferred by AI for Mazilu & Cosmulescu 2023
 - **Manganese** 8–34%: the analyses differ (Selimović et al. 2026, 34%; Tanaka & Tanaka 2001, 8–16%); basis inferred by AI for Selimović et al. 2026
 - **Vitamin K** 21–34%, high (Tanaka & Tanaka 2001); unconfirmed: one analysis, and it would be among the 3 highest of 66 raw fruits in USDA’s database
 - Also 10% or more in at least one analysis: magnesium, vitamin A, vitamin E, iron
 - 6 more analyses left out (dried samples, other parts, or the species, part or basis not clear)
 - Every source and sample, and what was searched: scan the code

Drawing: Britton & Brown, *Illustrated Flora* (1913)

No. 59

Chokeberry

Aronia arbutifolia, *Aronia melanocarpa* (and *A. x prunifolia*)
ripe berries (pomes)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat
EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep
ID **Beginner**

NATIVE 🍴 Eat raw / salad 🍰 Baking & desserts 🍡 Jam & jelly 🍷 Syrup & cordial 🍹 Juice & drinks

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

Upright, suckering native shrubs of the rose family, 3-12 ft tall, with white spring flowers and brilliant red fall color. Red chokeberry has bright red, glossy, pear-shaped berries about 1/4 to 1/3 in across that hang into winter. Black chokeberry has purple-black, pea-sized fruits. The fruit is extremely astringent and mouth-puckering raw, with red chokeberry somewhat more palatable than black. It is usually cooked and sweetened into jam, jelly, juice or baked goods; the jelly sets firm because the fruit is rich in pectin.

IS IT RIPE?

Black chokeberry ripens in August and September; red chokeberry matures from September to November (NC State; Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia). Ripe fruit is fully colored.

WHERE TO LOOK

Often planted in rain gardens and native landscaping, with wild plants in boggy spots like Suitland Bog (no picking) and on Pepco’s power-line land near Sligo Creek (private: pick only with the owner’s permission); Mason Neck State Park has logged plants and allows fruit picking.

WAYS TO USE IT

- jam/jelly (high pectin)
- eat raw (red chokeberry is the less astringent)
- juice
- syrup
- baked goods such as pancakes, crisps and pies

SAFETY

None notable beyond astringency: NC State notes the raw red chokeberry is so astringent it may cause choking (hence the name); eat it in small bites or cooked. Make sure you have a rose-family shrub with clusters of small apple-like fruits.



Legal to pick: Virginia state parks, no set limit

ALSO AROUND THIS MONTH with its peak month

American hazelnut **SEP** Black huckleberry **JUL** Blackberry & dewberry **JUL** Carolina rose **OCT** Chicory (roots, bulbs & tubers) **NO PEAK** Crabapple **SEP** Japanese honeysuckle **MAY** Lamb’s quarters **MAY** Pawpaw **SEP**
Plantain **APR** Spicebush (leaves & tender stems) **MAR** Spicebush (fruit) **SEP** Wild blueberry **JUL** Wild mint **JUL** Wineberry **JUN** Wood sorrel **MAY**

At their best in August

8 plants · scan a code for each plant's full page



44

Common purslane

leaves and tender stems (flowers and seeds also edible)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID Careful

NON-NATIVE

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48

American elderberry

ripe berries (cooked)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●○○ Real work

ID Careful

NATIVE

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49

Black cherry

ripe fruit flesh (pits removed)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID Careful

NATIVE

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51

Cornelian cherry

ripe fruit (flesh; discard pit)

FIND ●●○○ Patchy

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID Careful

NON-NATIVE

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52

Ground cherry

fully ripe fruit (from husk)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID Careful

NATIVE

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53

Kousa dogwood

ripe fruit (pulp only)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID Careful

NON-NATIVE

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54

Rugosa rose

ripe hips

FIND ●●○○ Patchy

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID Beginner

NON-NATIVE ☆

🍃

🗑️

🍶

🍹

🍺

J

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55

Sumac

ripe red fruit clusters (for cold-infused 'sumac-ade')

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID Careful

NATIVE

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September

PLANT OF THE MONTH



No. 56

Pawpaw

Asimina triloba

ripe fruit (pulp only)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID **Beginner**

NATIVE ⚠ Toxic parts 🍃 Eat raw / salad 🍰 Baking & desserts 🍲 Jam & jelly 🥤 Juice & drinks 🍷 Wine & spirits ☀ Dried fruit & leather

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

A small understory tree with large, drooping, tropical-looking leaves. It bears the largest native fruit in North America: green, potato-shaped fruits, often in clusters, with soft golden custard-like flesh around two rows of big brown seeds. The flavor is often compared to banana mixed with mango, and the fruit has a strong fruity smell when ripe.

IS IT RIPE?

A ripe fruit gives slightly when squeezed, like a peach, comes off with a gentle tug, and smells fruity (Kentucky State University).

WHERE TO LOOK

Floodplain understory along the C&O Canal towpath (e.g., Carderock up to Great Falls MD), where picking is allowed; it is also abundant on Theodore Roosevelt Island and in Rock Creek Park, but picking is banned there.

WAYS TO USE IT

- eat fresh: cut in half and scoop out the pulp with a spoon; discard skin and seeds
- substitute for banana in quick breads, cakes and cookies
- ice cream, custards, pies and milkshakes
- freeze pulp: freeze spoonfuls on a cookie sheet, then bag them (KSU). Pureed pulp freezes well (Clemson)

SAFETY

Eat only the pulp. The seeds and skin contain alkaloids that cause vomiting, so do not eat them (Clemson; Maryland DNR also says the seeds and skin are inedible). Some people react to pawpaw, so try a small amount first (Maryland DNR). Some people also react to touching the fruit, so consider gloves (MDC). No dangerous tree-fruit lookalike in the DC area.

NUTRITION % of daily value in a 140 g serving

- **Vitamin C** 2–43%: the analyses differ (USDA 2025, 43%; Pande & Akoh 2010, 15%; Nam et al. 2018, 2%)
- **Folate** 41%, high (USDA 2025); unconfirmed: one analysis, and it would be the highest of 88 raw fruits in USDA's database
- **Dietary fiber** 15–23%: the analyses differ (Brannan et al. 2021, 23%; USDA 2025, 17%; Nam et al. 2018, 15%)
- 4 more analyses left out (dried samples, other parts, or the species, part or basis not clear)
- Every source and sample, and what was searched: scan the code

Drawing: Britton & Brown, *Illustrated Flora* (1913)

J F M A M J J **A S** O N D

Legal to pick: C&O Canal, ½ gal/day



ALSO AROUND THIS MONTH with its peak month

Allegheny chinquapin **OCT** American beech **OCT** American elderberry (fruit) **JUL** American persimmon **OCT** Autumn olive **OCT** Black cherry **JUL** Blackhaw viburnum **OCT** Carolina rose **OCT**
Common blue violet (leaves & tender stems) **APR** Common purslane **JUL** Cornelian cherry **JUL** Dandelion (leaves & tender stems) **MAR** Dandelion (roots, bulbs & tubers) **OCT** Ginkgo **OCT** Ground cherry **AUG**
Hawthorn **OCT** Hickory **OCT** Japanese honeysuckle **MAY** Lamb's quarters **MAY** Multiflora rose **NOV** Plantain **APR** Rugosa rose **AUG** Sheep sorrel **APR** Spicebush (leaves & tender stems) **MAR** Sumac **AUG**
Wild mint **JUL** Wood sorrel **MAY**

No. 72

American persimmon

Diospyros virginiana
ripe fruit

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID **Beginner**

NATIVE Eat raw / salad Baking & desserts Jam & jelly Syrup & cordial Dried fruit & leather

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

A medium native tree with thick, dark bark broken into square blocks like alligator hide. It bears round orange fruits about 1 to 1.5 inches across, with an enlarged calyx at the base and a few flat seeds inside. Unripe fruit is so astringent it numbs and puckers the mouth. Fully ripe fruit is very soft, sweet and often wrinkled, with a date-like flavor.

IS IT RIPE?

Use ripeness signs, not the calendar: deep orange, very soft, and dropping from the tree on its own without rotting (UMD Extension).

WHERE TO LOOK

Old fields and sunny edges: legal at Prince William Forest Park and Virginia state parks like Mason Neck (few logged trees); the most-logged trees are on the C&O towpath, which is ambiguous for persimmon (not on its limits list; ask the park),

and in Barcroft Park on Four Mile Run and at Huntley Meadows, which are look-only.

WAYS TO USE IT

- eat fresh when fully soft
- persimmon pulp, pressed through a colander or food mill to remove seeds and skin, for persimmon pudding, breads and cookies
- pies, ice cream, syrups and jellies

SAFETY

Unripe fruit is unpleasantly astringent but is not described as poisonous (UMD). University of Missouri Extension warns not to eat persimmons on an empty stomach: their tannins can form a hard, indigestible mass in the stomach (a phytobezoar) that can cause a blockage. Eat them with other food and choose fully ripe fruit, which has less tannin. Discard the seeds.



NUTRITION % of daily value in a 140 g serving

- **Vitamin C** 103%, high (USDA SR Legacy)
- **Iron** 19%, good source (USDA SR Legacy); unconfirmed: one analysis, and it is the second-highest of 105 raw fruits in USDA’s database
- 1 more analysis left out (dried samples, other parts, or the species, part or basis not clear)
- Every source and sample, and what was searched: scan the code

Drawing: Britton & Brown, *Illustrated Flora* (1913)

J F M A M J J A S O N D

Legal to pick: Prince William Forest Park, 1 pt/day



ALSO AROUND THIS MONTH with its peak month

- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|-------------------|-----|-----------------------------------|---------|---|----------|------------------|-----|--|-----|-------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|--------------|-----|
| American hazelnut | SEP | Burdock | NOV | Chicory (roots, bulbs & tubers) | NO PEAK | Chicory (leaves & tender stems) | MAR | Chinese chestnut | SEP | Common blue violet (leaves & tender stems) | APR | Common chickweed | MAR | | | | |
| Common purslane | JUL | Curly dock | MAR | Dandelion (leaves & tender stems) | MAR | Field garlic / wild onion (leaves & tender stems) | MAR | Garlic mustard | MAR | Ground cherry | AUG | Henbit | MAR | Japanese honeysuckle | MAY | | |
| Jerusalem artichoke | NOV | Kousa dogwood | AUG | Multiflora rose | NOV | Orange daylily (roots, bulbs & tubers) | MAR, NOV | Pawpaw | SEP | Plantain | APR | Purple deadnettle | MAR | Rugosa rose | AUG | Sheep sorrel | APR |
| Spicebush (leaves & tender stems) | MAR | Spicebush (fruit) | SEP | Sumac | AUG | Wild grape | SEP | Wild mint | JUL | Wood sorrel | MAY | | | | | | |

At their best in October

16 plants · scan a code for each plant's full page

 59 Chokeberry <i>ripe berries (pomes)</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 60 Oak, white oak group <i>acorns (nutmeats, leached)</i> FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●●●● ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 62 Black walnut <i>nuts</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 64 Common hackberry <i>ripe fruit (thin flesh; whole fruit traditionally pounded)</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 65 Crabapple <i>ripe fruit (flesh; discard cores and seeds)</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner MIXED  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 66 Maypop <i>ripe fruit pulp (seed arils)</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D
 67 Oak, red oak group <i>acorns (nutmeats, leached)</i> FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●●●● ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 68 Allegheny chinquapin <i>nuts</i> FIND ●●●○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Careful NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 69 Autumn olive <i>ripe berries</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE ★★★   J F M A M J J A S O N D	 70 Dandelion <i>taproot</i> FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 71 Hickory <i>nuts</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 73 Blackhaw viburnum <i>ripe drupes</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D
	 74 Carolina rose <i>ripe hips</i> FIND ●●●○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 75 Hawthorn <i>ripe fruit ('haws'; flesh only)</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 76 American beech <i>nuts</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	 77 Ginkgo <i>seed kernel (after removing pulp and shell, cooked)</i> FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Careful NON-NATIVE  J F M A M J J A S O N D	

No. 76

American beech

Fagus grandifolia
nuts

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat
EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep
ID **Beginner**
NATIVE 🌿 Eat raw / salad 🍳 Roasted nuts

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

A large tree with smooth gray bark. Small prickly husks split to release shiny brown, irregularly three-sided nuts. The kernels are small and edible raw or cooked.

IS IT RIPE?

Beechnuts ripen from September to November, and the burs open to drop the nuts after the first heavy frosts, finishing within a few weeks (Silvics Manual). NC State Extension lists September to October. The first nuts to fall are usually wormy or aborted (Silvics Manual), so crack a few to check they are filled before gathering many. In the District the average first freeze comes around November 18 (FOX 5 DC). Good crops come only every 2 to 8 years. All three dates are estimates.

WHERE TO LOOK

Mature slope and ravine forest, above all Rock Creek Park (no gathering); Mason Neck State Park has plenty of logged beech and allows nuts, while beechnuts are ambiguous on the C&O Canal (not on its limits list; ask the park).

WAYS TO USE IT

- Eat raw in small quantities, or cooked or roasted (NC State Extension; Practical Self Reliance)
- Nuts are an important wildlife food, so take modestly (Silvics Manual)

SAFETY

NC State: low-severity toxicity. The nuts contain saponic glycosides and can irritate the stomach in some people if eaten in quantity, so eat raw beechnuts sparingly. No dangerous lookalike nut.



NUTRITION

- No measurements found of the fresh nuts you eat: 1 analysis was left out (dried samples, other parts, or the species, part or basis not clear)
- Every source and sample, and what was searched: scan the code

Drawing: Britton & Brown, *Illustrated Flora* (1913)

J F M A M J J A **S** **O** **N** D

Legal to pick: Virginia state parks, no set limit



ALSO AROUND THIS MONTH with its peak month

Allegheny chinquapin **OCT** Autumn olive **OCT** Black walnut (nut & seed) **SEP** Blackhaw viburnum **OCT** Carolina rose **OCT** Chicory (roots, bulbs & tubers) **NO PEAK** Chicory (leaves & tender stems) **MAR** Chokeberry **SEP**
Common chickweed **MAR** Common hackberry **SEP** Common purslane **JUL** Crabapple **SEP** Curly dock **MAR** Dandelion (leaves & tender stems) **MAR** Field garlic / wild onion (leaves & tender stems) **MAR** Garlic mustard **MAR**
Hairy bittercress **MAR** Henbit **MAR** Hickory **OCT** Japanese honeysuckle **MAY** Oak, red oak group **SEP** Oak, white oak group **SEP** Purple deadnettle **MAR** Rugosa rose **AUG** Sheep sorrel **APR**
Spicebush (leaves & tender stems) **MAR** Wild grape **SEP** Wood sorrel **MAY**

At their best in November

8 plants · scan a code for each plant's full page



70 Dandelion

taproot

FIND ●○○○ Everywhere

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID Beginner

NON-NATIVE ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞

J F M A M J J A S **O** **N** D



72 American persimmon

ripe fruit

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●○○○ Grab & eat

ID Beginner

NATIVE ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞

J F M A M J J A S **O** **N** D



75 Hawthorn

ripe fruit ('haws'; flesh only)

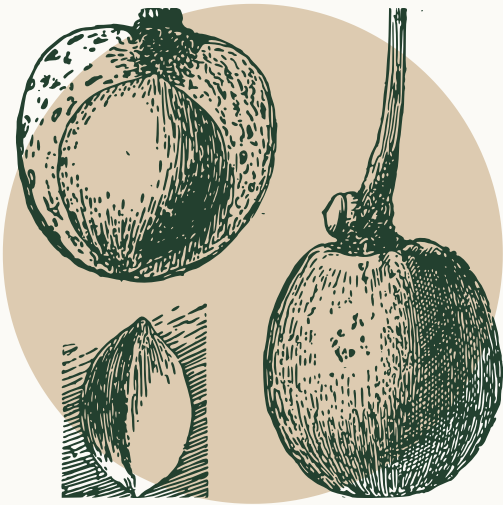
FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●○○ Real work

ID Beginner

NATIVE ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞

J F M A M J J A S **O** **N** D



77 Ginkgo

seed kernel (after removing pulp and shell, cooked)

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●○○ Real work

ID Careful

NON-NATIVE ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞

J F M A M J J A S **O** **N** D



78 Burdock

taproot of first-year plants (young peeled leaf and flower stalks also edible)

FIND ●○○○ Everywhere

EFFORT ●●○○ Real work

ID Careful

NON-NATIVE ☆ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞

J F **M** **A** M J J A S **O** **N** D



79 Jerusalem artichoke

tubers

FIND ●●○○ Patchy

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID Beginner

NATIVE ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞

J **F** M A M J J A S **O** **N** D



80 Multiflora rose

ripe hips

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID Beginner

NON-NATIVE ★★★ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞

J **F** M A M J J A S **O** **N** D



81 Orange daylily

small, firm root tubers

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat

EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep

ID Beginner

NON-NATIVE ★★★ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞ ☞

J **F** **M** A M J J A S **O** **N** D



Two roses this month: Carolina rose is native, multiflora rose is an invader. Both have ripe hips now, so they share the page.



Drawing: Britton & Brown, *Illustrated Flora* (1913)

No. 74
Carolina rose
Rosa carolina
ripe hips

FIND ●●●○ Patchy
EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep
ID **Beginner**
NATIVE Jam & jelly Syrup & cordial Tea

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
A low native rose, usually 1-3 ft tall, with slender straight prickles and leaves of 5-7 leaflets. It has single, bright pink five-petaled flowers in May-June. Its small round red hips ripen from late summer. The hips are usually dotted with tiny stalked glands, though some are smooth (Flora of North America; Go Botany).

IS IT RIPE?
Pick fully red hips. Plants are low and scattered, and birds and mammals eat the hips through the winter, so expect small harvests, especially late in the season.

WHERE TO LOOK
Dry meadows and rocky openings, notably along the C&O Canal (ambiguous for rose hips: ask the park) and at Great Falls Park VA (no gathering); Virginia state parks such as Mason Neck allow them.

- WAYS TO USE IT**
- tea (hips)
 - jelly (hips)
 - petals: syrup, jelly or garnish (remove the bitter white base)
 - syrup
- SAFETY**
Remove or strain out the seeds: UAF warns their prongs might lodge in the intestines. Avoid sprayed or roadside plants.

NUTRITION both roses

- Carolina rose: no nutrient measurements found for this fruit
- Multiflora rose: no measurements found of the fresh fruit you eat: 1 analysis was left out (dried samples, other parts, or the species, part or basis not clear)
- Every source and sample, and what was searched: scan either code



Drawing: USDA, *Selected Weeds of the United States* (1970)

No. 80
Multiflora rose
Rosa multiflora
ripe hips

FIND ●●○○ Common in the right habitat
EFFORT ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep
ID **Beginner**
NON-NATIVE ★★★ Spray risk
 Pesto & sauces Jam & jelly Syrup & cordial Tea
 Juice & drinks

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
A sprawling Asian rose with arching green canes, curved prickles, and compound leaves of 7-9 leaflets. The key identification feature is fringed (comb-like) stipules at the base of each leafstalk. In late spring it has clusters of small white flowers, followed by clusters of small (about 1/4 in), smooth, bright red hips that last through winter. They taste sour and floral.

IS IT RIPE?
Collecting after the first frost is often recommended, and riper hips are sweeter (University of Alaska Fairbanks Extension). Pick firm, fully red hips and skip shriveled or moldy ones.

WHERE TO LOOK
Thorny thickets on nearly every woods edge and old field (Rock Creek Park, the C&O towpath, Four Mile Run), but hips are legal to

pick in Virginia state parks such as Mason Neck and Leesylvania or on private land with permission, ambiguous on the C&O towpath (ask the park), and banned in Rock Creek Park and along Four Mile Run.

- WAYS TO USE IT**
- tea (dried)
 - jelly
 - juice/drink
 - puree/sauce
 - syrup

SAFETY
Remove or strain out the seeds: UAF warns their prongs might lodge in the intestines. Strain tea, juice and syrup through fine cloth. Do not harvest from plants that may have been sprayed with herbicide or pesticide, as multiflora rose is a common spray target, or from roadside dust and exhaust.



In season in December

20 plants · scan a code for each plant's full page

 79 Jerusalem artichoke tubers FIND ●●●○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 1 Maple sap (boiled to syrup) FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●●●● ID Beginner NATIVE  JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 3 Chicory taproot FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE  JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 4 Common chickweed tender stem tips, leaves and flowers FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Careful NON-NATIVE ★★   JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 6 Field garlic / wild onion leaves (green tops), used like chives FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Careful MIXED ☆  JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 7 Garlic mustard leaves (first-year rosettes and young second-year leaves); roots and seeds also edible FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE ★★★   JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 8 Hairy bittercress leaves, tender stems and flowers FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE  JFMA MJ JAS ON D
 9 Henbit leaves, stems and flowers (tender tops) FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE  JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 10 Spicebush twigs, young leaves and early flowers, for tea (berries covered separately) FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 15 Purple deadnettle young tops and leaves (flowers too) FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE  JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 54 Rugosa rose ripe hips FIND ●●●○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE ☆  JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 64 Common hackberry ripe fruit (thin flesh; whole fruit traditionally pounded) FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 65 Crabapple ripe fruit (flesh; discard cores and seeds) FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●●○ ID Beginner MIXED  JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 70 Dandelion taproot FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE  JFMA MJ JAS ON D
 71 Hickory nuts FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●●○ ID Beginner NATIVE  JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 72 American persimmon ripe fruit FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●○○○ ID Beginner NATIVE  JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 75 Hawthorn ripe fruit ('haws'; flesh only) FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●●○ ID Beginner NATIVE  JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 77 Ginkgo seed kernel (after removing pulp and shell, cooked) FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●●○ ID Careful NON-NATIVE  JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 78 Burdock taproot of first-year plants (young peeled leaf and flower stalks also edible) FIND ●○○○ EFFORT ●●●○ ID Careful NON-NATIVE ☆  JFMA MJ JAS ON D	 81 Orange daylily small, firm root tubers FIND ●●○○ EFFORT ●●○○ ID Beginner NON-NATIVE ★★★  JFMA MJ JAS ON D	

Find ●○○○ Everywhere ●●○○ Common in the right habitat ●●●○ Patchy ●●●● Elusive Effort ●○○○ Grab & eat ●●○○ Quick kitchen prep ●●●○ Real work ●●●● Project

Season in season peak  Deadly lookalike  Toxic lookalike  Toxic parts  Cook first  Spray risk Circle Fruit Nut & seed Leaves & tender stems, young shoots Flowers, buds & pollen Roots, bulbs & tubers Sap

 Eat raw / salad  Cooked vegetable / soup  Pesto & sauces  Baking & desserts  Jam & jelly  Syrup & cordial  Tea  Juice & drinks

 Wine & spirits  Pickles  Spice & seasoning  Flour  Nut milk & oil  Coffee substitute  Dried fruit & leather  Roasted nuts

Sources and credits

WHERE THE FACTS COME FROM

Everything in this calendar except the nutrition panels comes from a dataset built from 1,046 sources by 155 publishers, among them state and federal agencies, university extension services, park services, nonprofits, journals and news outlets; 261 of the sources are sets of iNaturalist sighting records. The nutrition figures come from published analyses and USDA’s food database. Each plant’s page on the website lists its sources line by line.

The data was checked claim by claim against those sources, in independent review rounds, in October 2026.

MOST-USED SOURCES

iNaturalist	Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center
USDA NRCS	National Capital Poison Center (poison.org)
North Carolina State University	Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
University of Maryland	Oregon State University
University of Georgia	DCist
USDA Forest Service	Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Missouri Department of Conservation	Maryland Department of Agriculture
National Park Service	Towson University
Penn State University	Ohio State University
Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia	Iowa State University
Maryland Department of Natural Resources	Practical Self Reliance
Virginia Botanical Associates	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Purdue University	
Virginia Tech	

NOT AN IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

Foraging carries real risks. Use this calendar for ideas and timing, confirm every plant with a reliable guide or an expert, and follow each park’s rules.

DRAWINGS

USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Britton, N.L., and A. Brown. 1913. *An illustrated flora of the northern United States, Canada and the British Possessions*. 3 vols. Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York.

L. H. Bailey, *The Standard Cyclopedia of Horticulture* (1914–17): Cornelian cherry, kousa dogwood, rugosa rose, wineberry, ginkgo.

USDA, *Selected Weeds of the United States*, Agriculture Handbook 366 (1970): multiflora rose.

H. Collett, *Flora Simlensis* (1902), drawn by Matilda Smith: autumn olive.

Chinese chestnut is shown by Britton & Brown’s American chestnut, the closest public-domain drawing AI found.

SHORT NAMES IN THE TEXT

Casey Trees a Washington, D.C. tree nonprofit

Clemson Clemson Cooperative Extension

Go Botany Native Plant Trust’s online flora

iNaturalist photographed sightings shared by naturalists

Iowa State Iowa State University Extension

KSU Kentucky State University Pawpaw Program

Maryland DNR Maryland Department of Natural Resources

MDC Missouri Department of Conservation

NC State, NC State Extension North Carolina State University Extension

Ohio State Ohio State University Extension

Silvics Manual *Silvics of North America*, USDA Forest Service

Towson Towson University’s Glen Arboretum

UAF University of Alaska Fairbanks Cooperative Extension Service

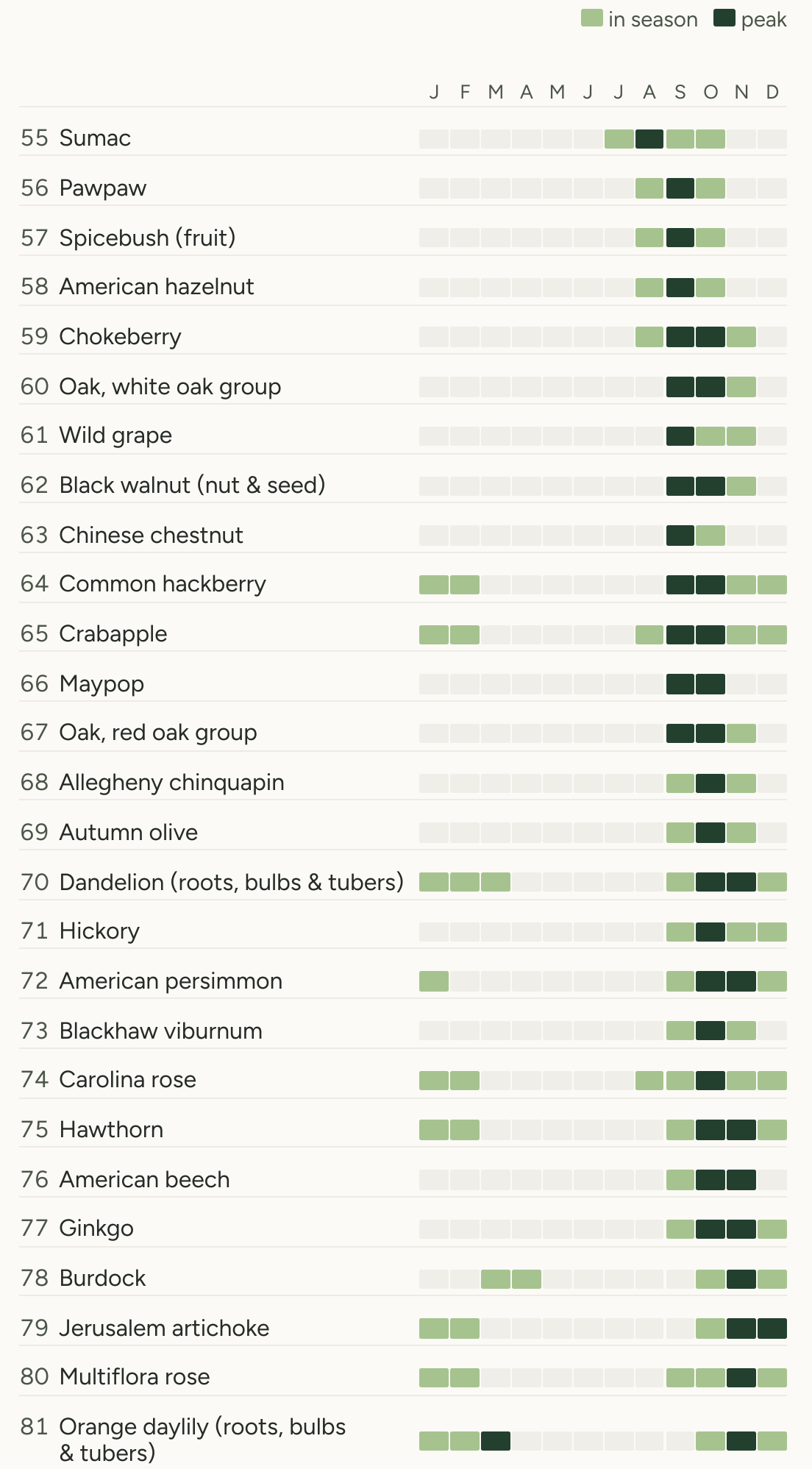
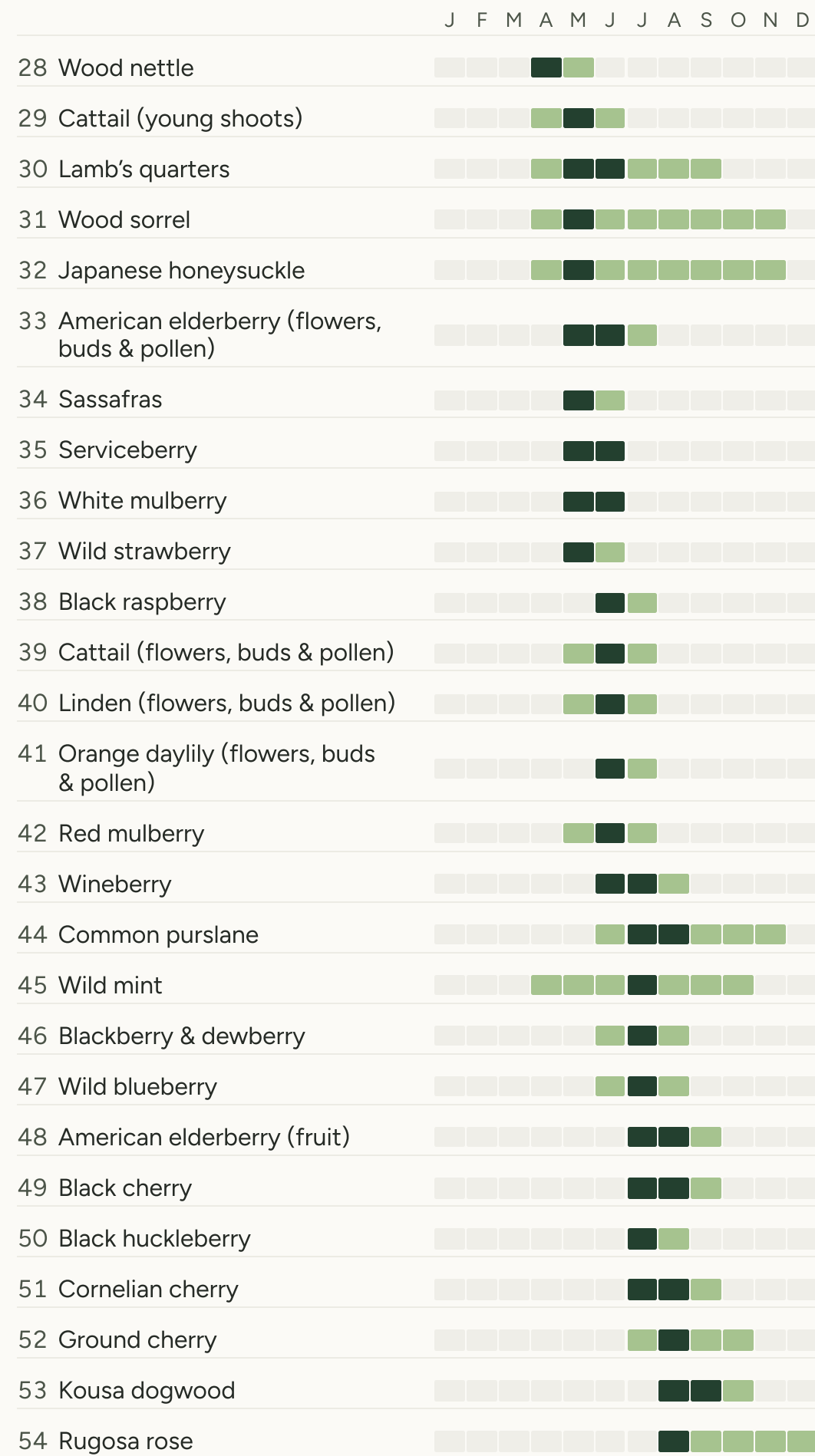
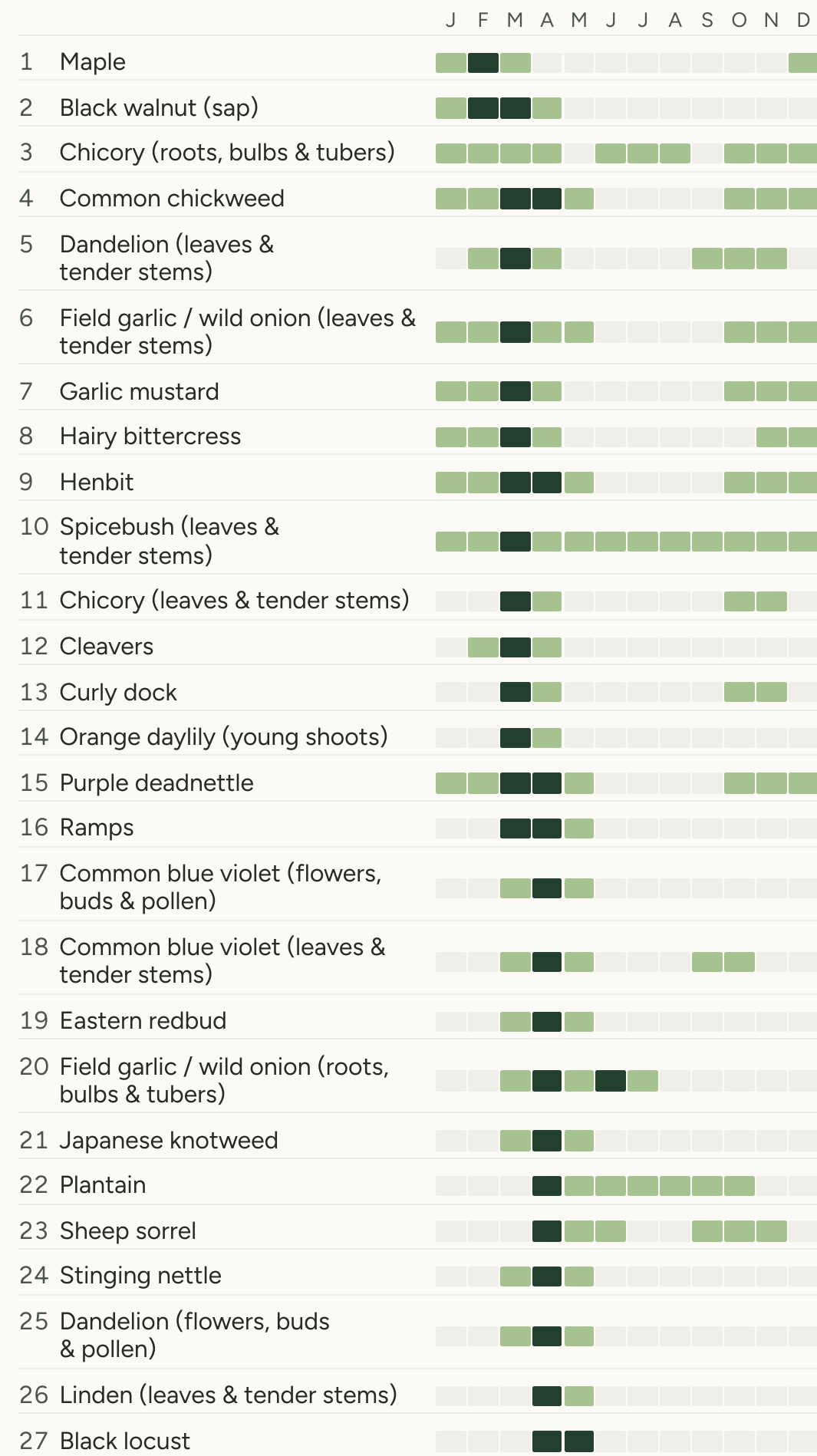
UMD, UMD Extension University of Maryland Extension

Wildflower Center Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

VA DCR High ranked High, the top of the high, medium and low invasiveness levels on the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation’s invasive plant list

pt, qt, gal pint, quart, gallon

The year at a glance



A Forager's Year

Every plant's full page, with its sources:



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