Green Eye Open

PAUL GOVER · NCSF · CPR/AED · JANESVILLE, WI

SOUTHERN WISCONSIN FORAGING GUIDE

Summer Edibles

June — August

Rock County & Southern Wisconsin · Oak-Hickory Forest · Prairie Edge · Riverbanks

& SAFETY FIRST

Confirm ALL identification markers before consuming any wild plant. Use multiple characteristics — not photos alone. When in doubt, do not eat. Lookalike species can be deadly.

8

PLANTS

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

1. **Check ALL ID markers** Leaf shape, stem, smell, habitat — not just color
2. **Read lookalike warnings** Every warning in this guide represents a real risk
3. **Smell is critical** For Allium (onion family), the smell test is definitive
4. **Harvest responsibly** Take no more than 1/3 of any stand; leave roots when possible

Book a Guided Nature Walk

Walk the ground with someone who knows it. greeneyeopen.com/book

Ø>ÞÐ BERRIES July – August

Wild Raspberry

Rubus idaeus

KEY IDENTIFICATION

- Compound leaves with 3–5 leaflets, white underneath; canes with fine prickles
- Red berries pull cleanly from white core (core stays on plant)
- White 5-petal flowers June; biennial canes (first year leafy, second year fruits)

WHERE IN WI

Woodland edges, forest clearings, roadsides, powerline cuts throughout Rock County. Common on edges of oak-hickory stands.

HOW TO USE

Intensely flavorful vs. cultivated varieties. Eat fresh, make jam, freeze for smoothies, ferment. Leaves for tea. High in vitamin C, manganese, anthocyanins. No lookalike concerns.

Ø>ÞÐ BERRIES Flowers June; Berries August

American Elderberry

Sambucus canadensis

KEY IDENTIFICATION

- Large shrub 5–12 ft; compound leaves with 5–11 toothed leaflets
- Flat-topped white flower clusters in June–July
- Large drooping clusters of deep purple-black berries in August
- Stems have white pithy center; unpleasant smell from bark

WHERE IN WI

Streambanks, moist roadsides, forest edges. Common throughout Rock County along Rock River corridor and wet woodland edges.

HOW TO USE

Flowers: fritters or elderflower cordial. Berries (cooked only — raw cause nausea): syrups, jams, wine. Documented antiviral properties. Leaves, bark, roots: DO NOT EAT.

& LOOKALIKE: Water Hemlock

Cicuta maculata — MOST TOXIC PLANT IN N. AMERICA

Grows in same wet habitat. Water hemlock has finely divided compound leaves (not once-compound), hollow chambered stems with yellowish sap, no pith, purple-streaked stems. If in doubt, do not harvest.

Ø<ßD MUSHROOM July – September

Golden Chanterelle

Cantharellus cibarius

KEY IDENTIFICATION

- Brilliant egg-yolk yellow to orange-yellow; vase-shaped cap 1–5"
- Undersides: forked blunt-edged RIDGES (not knife-blade gills) running down stem
- Thick solid pale yellow flesh; fruity apricot smell
- Grows singly from soil under oaks — NOT from wood

WHERE IN WI

Symbiotic with oaks — in oak and mixed hardwood forests, often in moss. Rock County: oak-hickory stands in Kettle Moraine vicinity, under large oaks in partial shade. After summer rain.

HOW TO USE

One of the world's premier edible mushrooms. Always cook. Sauté in butter with garlic, add to pasta or risotto. Dry or freeze for winter.

& LOOKALIKE: Jack-o'-Lantern

Omphalotus olearius — TOXIC

Sharp-edged knife-blade gills (not forked ridges), grows in clusters at wood/stump bases (not soil), glows faintly in the dark. Chanterelles grow singly from soil under oaks.

Ø<ß? WILD GREENS June – September

Lamb's Quarters

Chenopodium album

KEY IDENTIFICATION

- Diamond or goose-foot shaped leaves with irregularly toothed margins
- Young leaves and stems coated with distinctive white powdery/mealy substance
- Alternate leaves; stem often streaked red or pink; 1–5 feet tall

WHERE IN WI

Disturbed ground, garden edges, farm fields, roadsides throughout Rock County. One of the most abundant summer weeds in Southern Wisconsin.

HOW TO USE

More protein, calcium, iron, vitamins than spinach. Young leaves raw in salads or cooked like spinach. Seeds ground into flour (traditional use). One of the most nutritious common weeds.

Ø<ß? WILD GREENS July – August

Purslane

Portulaca oleracea

KEY IDENTIFICATION

- Thick fleshy succulent paddle-shaped leaves, alternate on stem
- Reddish-brown trailing stems; low-growing mat habit
- Small yellow 5-petal flowers open only in bright sun
- Slightly sour lemony taste

WHERE IN WI

Gardens, sidewalk cracks, disturbed bare soil throughout Rock County. One of the most common garden weeds. Full sun, tolerates heat and drought.

HOW TO USE

Highest plant source of omega-3 fatty acids (more than flaxseed). Eat raw in salads, cook in soups and stir-fries, or pickle. Mild sour flavor. Cultivated as a vegetable across the Mediterranean and Middle East.

Ø<ß? HERBS June – September

Wild Mint

Mentha arvensis

KEY IDENTIFICATION

- Square stem — all mints have this characteristic
- Opposite serrated oval leaves; strong unmistakable mint smell when crushed
- Tiny lavender or pink flowers in whorls around stem at leaf nodes

WHERE IN WI

Streambanks, moist meadows, wet ditches throughout Rock County. Common along Rock River and Sugar River corridors. Forms large spreading colonies in wet soil.

HOW TO USE

Fresh or dried tea, cold drinks, cocktails, salads, mint sauce. Contains menthol with real analgesic and antispasmodic properties. Traditional use for digestive complaints, headaches, colds. Dry for winter use.

Ø<ß8 HERBS / FLOWERS July – August

Wild Bergamot / Bee Balm

Monarda fistulosa

KEY IDENTIFICATION

- Square stem (mint family); strong oregano-thyme-like smell when crushed
- Distinctive shaggy round flower head of tubular lavender-pink flowers
- Opposite lance-shaped toothed leaves; 2–4 feet tall

WHERE IN WI

Prairie remnants, open meadows, dry-medium roadsides, forest edges. Common prairie wildflower in Rock County — look along Rock River Prairie areas.

HOW TO USE

Dry leaves and flowers for tea. Use fresh leaves to flavor meat. Flowers as edible garnish. Contains thymol and carvacrol (same antimicrobial compounds as oregano). Traditional Ojibwe and Menominee medicine for respiratory infections.

Ø>ÞÐ BERRIES June – July

Red Mulberry

Morus rubra

KEY IDENTIFICATION

- Tree 30–60 ft; leaves vary on same tree (simple oval to 2–3 lobed)
- Milky sap when leaf or twig is broken (distinctive)
- Elongated aggregate berry 1–1.5", deep red to nearly black when ripe

WHERE IN WI

Streambanks, woodland edges, floodplains, urban parks. Common along Rock River in Janesville and Beloit. White mulberry (M. alba) also common — equally edible.

HOW TO USE

Sweet-tart berries best eaten fresh or made into jam, pies, wine. Lay tarp under ripe tree and shake — dozens fall at once. High in resveratrol and vitamin C. Harvest window is short — birds compete aggressively.

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Go walk the ground.

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