

Weeds are good for you!

by Peter Garnham

I have heard it said that a weed is simply a successful plant in the wrong place. As we all know, they are certainly successful – if you turn your back on bare soil for a day or two, it is certain to have some healthy-looking weeds growing there the next time you look.

The bright side is that two of our most common weeds at EECO Farm, purslane and lambs quarter, are not only edible, they are astonishingly nutritious. Try them and see what you think! I'll be happy to help you identify them. If you want more purslane, I've got lots of it!



Purslane contains more Omega-3 fatty acids (alpha-linolenic acid in particular) than any other leafy vegetable plant! Purslane has .01 mg/g of EPA, an extraordinary amount, which is an Omega-3 fatty acid normally found mostly in fish and some algae. It also contains vitamins (mainly vitamin C, and some vitamin B and carotenoids), as well as dietary minerals such as magnesium, calcium, potassium and iron. It is often sold in New York City Greenmarkets.

There was even a recipe for a purslane and parsley salad in the August 2008 issue of the late-lamented *Gourmet* magazine, on page 107. Basically you take 6 cups of tender young purslane sprigs and leaves, 4 cups of flat-leaf parsley, ½ lb. of halved cherry tomatoes, and dress it with a vinaigrette (olive oil, lemon juice, and shallot). This recipe serves six.

Lambs quarter is one of the most nutritious weeds you can eat. One cup of raw lamb's quarter leaves contains about 80 mg of vitamin C, 11,600 IU of vitamin A, 72 mg of phosphorus, 309 mg of calcium, and good amounts of thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, and iron.



Be careful not to confuse lambs quarter with red-root pigweed, which is vaguely similar in appearance and contains what can be a dangerous amount of oxalic acid. As the name suggests, this plant has a noticeably red root. Lambs quarter has creamy-white roots.

According to www.herbalremediesinfo.com, “Lamb's-quarter can be used as a replacement for spinach in soups, egg dishes, or vegetable dishes. If you are blessed with an abundance of this herb in your yard or garden, consider making up a big batch of Lamb's Quarter Vinegar for a daily boost of minerals that can't be beat! You can also add a big handful to your favorite pesto recipe for extra nutrition and a delicious, slightly nutty flavor.”

So the next time you are weeding your garden at EECO Farm, save a big bunch of those yummy weeds and enjoy!

