

Edible and Poisonous Plants of the Methow Valley

Compiled by The Methow Naturalist/Methow Biodiversity Project, PO Box 175, Winthrop, WA 98862

Common Name	Scientific Name	Season	Use/Notes
Edible Native Plants			
Black Tree Lichen	<i>Alectoria fremontii</i>	All year	A delicacy to some native people, “starvation food” to others. Edibility may vary from place to place. Usually soaked and then steamed overnight, the resulting concentrated mass mixed with onions or berries.
Nodding & Hooker’s Onions	<i>Allium cernuum</i> & <i>Allium acuminatum</i>	Before flowering	Nodding onion is relatively uncommon in the Methow. Digging the bulb kills the entire plant. The plant and bulb could be mistaken for the deadly death camas.
Serviceberry	<i>Amelanchier alnifolia</i>	June-August	Fruits are seedy but tasty; often made into jam or syrup. Can be dried for winter.
Balsamroot	<i>Balsamorhiza sagitta</i>	Spring-Fall	The smaller roots are “beaten and peeled” and then steamed or baked. The young shoots and bud-stems are edible in early spring; seeds are edible as well.
Oregon Grape	<i>Berberis aquifolium</i> & <i>Berberis nervosa</i>	July-August	Berries are seedy and tart but delicious; often made into jelly.
Springbeauty	<i>Claytonia lanceolata</i>	Spring	Each plant has a tiny tuber below ground that is edible raw or cooked; flower and leaves are edible raw. Usually dug just after flowering.
Fireweed	<i>Epilobium angustifolium</i>	Before flowering	The young shoots and leaves are edible raw or boiled.
Lilies	<i>Erythronium</i> , <i>Fritillaria</i> , & <i>Lilium</i>	Before flowering	The entire plant is edible, stem, leaves, flower, bulb.
Mushrooms	<i>Fungi</i>	After rain	There are a number of edible mushrooms in the Methow, notable among them morels in forest areas that have burned, puffballs, and boletes.
Cow Parsnip	<i>Heracleum lanatum</i>	Before flowering	Young stalks and leaf stems are edible raw after peeling. Best to use gloves in harvesting and peeling as the stalks contain phytotoxic compounds, making skin sensitive to sunlight.
Waterleaf	<i>Hydrophyllum capitatum</i> <i>Hydrophyllum sp.</i>	April-May	The leaves are edible raw before flowering; the long, fleshy roots are edible after boiling or steaming, probably as the plant withers
Bitterroot	<i>Lewisia rediviva</i>	Early May	The tiny root is edible after slipping off the bitter skin and cooking, usually dug when the flower is in bud stage.
Biscuitroot	<i>Lomatium macrocarpum</i>	April-May	Roots are peppery but edible.
Indian Celery	<i>Lomatium nudicaule</i> & <i>Lomatium ambiguum</i>	Before flowering	Roots were dug in early spring, peeled and cooked. The young leaves are edible raw or cooked until the flowers finish blooming; they taste rather like celery.
Yellow Monkeyflower	<i>Mimulus guttatus</i>	Before flowering & in early bloom period	The entire plant can be eaten raw; it has a slightly bitter flavor.
Sweet Cicely	<i>Osmorhiza chilensis</i> & <i>Osmorhiza occidentalis</i>	Before flowering	Roots and seeds are edible, cooked and probably raw; they are anise-flavored.
Whitebark Pine	<i>Pinus albicaulis</i>	August-September	Whitebark pines produce pine nuts, the trick is getting them before the Clark’s nutcrackers do. Dried cones can be pounded or roasted to extract the seeds.

Cottonwood, Aspen	<i>Populus trichocarpa</i> & <i>Populus temuloides</i>	Mid-spring	The inner cambium is edible and considered a delicacy by some; can be eaten raw.
Chokecherry	<i>Prunus virginiana</i>	July-August	Fruits are astringent but tasty, can be used for jam.
Wild Rose	All <i>Rosa</i> species	August-October	Rose hips can be eaten raw or used to make tea.
Raspberry & Thimbleberry	All <i>Rubus</i> species	July-August	The ripe berries are edible and often tasty.
Blue Elderberry	<i>Sambucus cerulea</i>	August –September	Berries are tart and seedy but good tasting; used to make jam and syrup.
Buffaloberry	<i>Sherperdia canadensis</i>	July-September (when berries are ripe).	Can be whipped into a froth (add ¼ c. of water to 1 c. crushed berries) and eaten, or add sugar. The bitter-sour flavor is an acquired taste. Edible raw.
Solomon’s Seal	<i>Smilacina racemosa</i> & <i>Smilacina stellata</i>	July-September	The ripe berries are very seedy but extremely sweet; they are a favorite bear food. The roots are edible as well, are said to resemble onions in flavor.
Cattail	<i>Typha latifolia</i>	All year	Cattail has been called “the supermarket of the swamp.” The roots, shoots, pollen and the young flowers are all edible.
Stinging Nettles	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Before flowering	Leaves are much like spinach when boiled; heat destroys their stinging quality.
Blueberries	All <i>Vaccinium</i> species	August-September	Berries are delicious.
Veronica	<i>Veronica americana</i> & <i>Veronica anagallis-aq</i>	Spring & Summer	Leaves and stems are edible raw or cooked.
Edible Alien Plants			
Lambsquarters	<i>Chenopodium album</i>	Before flowering	The leaves make a cooked green much like spinach.
Watercress	<i>Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum</i>	All year	A tasty mustard green when cooked..
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Before flowering	Leaves make a good raw or cooked green if gathered before flowering.
Salsify	<i>Tragopogon dubium</i>	Before flowering or in the fall	The fleshy roots are edible raw or cooked and resemble parsnip in flavor.
Poisonous Plants			
Baneberry	<i>Actea rubra</i>		Berries, foliage and roots are all highly poisonous.
Water Hemlock	<i>Cicuta douglasii</i>		All parts of the plant are poisonous, the thickened roots are especially so.
False Hellbore	<i>Veratrum viride</i>		All parts of the plant are toxic.
Death Camas	<i>Zigadenus venenosus</i>		The bulbs and leaves are highly poisonous.