

Nibbling on Native Plants in Your Backyard and Beyond Presented by <u>Russ Cohen</u> at the 2022 Annual Meeting of the Groton Conservation Trust, held at the Groton Inn, on Monday, May 9, 2022.



Penobscot Nanrantsouak Native Land Arosaguntacook Passamaguoddy Acknowledgement Wabanaki (Dawnland Confederacy) Wabanaki (Dawnland Confederacy) Aucocisco Abenaki / Abénaquis Pennacook Pentucket screenshot from the interactive website https://native-land.ca/ Pawtucket Mohican Massa-adchu-es-Mohican et (Massachusett) Nipmuc Podunks Narragansett Tunxis Nauset Wôpanâak (Wampanoag) Mohegan Paugussett Pequot Quinnipiac Pequonnock

•There has been a burgeoning interest in recent years in <u>restoring</u> <u>native plants to our gardens, yards</u> <u>and landscapes</u> (e.g., as evidenced by the 2010 formation of the group <u>Grow Native Massachusetts</u>).

•This movement got a major boost a dozen years ago with the publication of the book <u>Bringing Nature Home:</u> <u>How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife</u> <u>in our Gardens</u>.

•In Bringing Nature Home, author and University of Delaware Entomology Professor Doug Tallamy makes a compelling case for the key role that native plant species play in supporting our native species of wildlife, particularly insects (such as butterflies and moths), which (in addition to their intrinsic value) serve as a major source of nourishment for nestling birds. Taliarity is new of the most original and persuasive present day authors on conservation.

> - KOWARD D. WILSON, terroriting freedouth Promotory Chairman Parameter Division by

A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard

DOUGLAS W. TALLAMY best willing author of Bringing Nature Hume (One of Doug's newer books, released February 2020.)

<u>Hometown Habitat</u>, a documentary film that extols the virtues of native plants, and features Tallamy, was released in the spring of 2016 A few examples of outreach materials intended to promote and facilitate the planting of native species --

Native Tree and Shrub Availability List





Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Natural Resources Wildlife Division



Native Plant Site Solutions for Backyard Habitat

A how-to guide for designers and homeowners interested in enhancing wildlife habitat value in urban and suburban areas

Native Shrubs for Plantings as Wildlife Food (Mass. Division of Fisheries + Wildlife) Town of Lexington's list of recommended native plants

Native Plants for Sustainable Landscaping brochure, Town of Concord





THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND OUTREACH CENTER

THINK BIG 💮 WE DO

Excerpt from <u>Rhode Island Coastal Plant Guide</u> - while extremely informative and user-friendly, note the lack of an "edible by humans" column

University of Rhode Island

URI A-Z | Directory | Search

Rhode Island Coastal Plant Guide

College of the Environment and Life Sciences
University of Rhode Island
Cooperative Extension
Education Center
Education, Excellence for the 21st Century



50 of 231 Species	Page 1 🔻 of 3		c	lear F	ilte	r												Help
[Enter all or part of name above to filter list] [Select from dropdown list to filter plant list by attributes]																		
		-	-	+ 🔻	•	-	-	•	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		-	
Species	Common Name	Zone	Plant Type	Native Status	Full Sun	Shade Tolerant	Drought Tolerant	Wet Sites	Wind Tolerant	Na:Spray Tolerant	Na:Soil Tolerant	Acid Tolerant	pH Adapt	Rain Gardens	Dune Plant	Height	Width	
Alnus incana ssp. rugosa	Speckled Alder	1	Shrub	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	>10'	6-12	1
Alnus serrulata	Common Alder	1	Shrub	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	>10'	6-12	'
Amelanchier arborea !	Serviceberry	1	Tree	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	+	-	>10'	15-2	5'
Amelanchier canadensis !	Shadbush	1	Shrub	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	>10'	varia	able
Amelanchier laevis	Allegheny Serviceberry	1	Tree	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	>10'	15-2	5'
Amelanchier stolonifera	Running Serviceberry	1	Shrub	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	2-6'	varia	able
Ammophila breviligulata	American Beach Grass	1	Grass	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	2-6'	-	
Andropogon gerardii	Big Bluestem	1	Grass	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	6-10'	2'	
Andropogon glomeratus	Bushy Bluestem	2	Grass	+	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<2'	-	
Andropogon virginicus	Broomsedge	1	Grass	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	2-6'	1-2'	
Arctostaphylos uva-urs	<i>i</i> Bearberry	1	Shrub	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	<2'	varia	able
Asclepias tuberosa	Butterfly Milkweed	2	Per.	+	+	-	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	2-6'	2'	
Atriplex sp.	Salt Bush	1	Shrub	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	-	+	<2'	6'	
Baccharis halimifolia	Groundsel-bush	1	Shrub	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	>10'	5-12	
Baptisia tinctoria	False Indigo	1	Per.	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	-	-	2-6'	2-3'	
Betula populifolia	Gray Birch	2	Tree	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	>10'	10-2	0'
Carex flaccosperma	Thin Fruit Sedge	2	Grass	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	<2'	6-12	
Carex pensylvanica	Pennsylvania Sedge	1	Grass	+	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	-	-	-	<2'	6-9"	
Carex platyphylla	Broadleaf Sedge	2	Grass	+	-	+	+	-	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	<2'	10"	
Carex stricta	Tussock Sedge	2	Grass	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	<2'	1.5-2	2'
Carya ovata	Shagbark Hickory	2	Tree	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	>10'	-	
Ceanothus americanus	New Jersey Tea	2	Shrub	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	2-6'	3-5'	
Celtis occidentalis	Common Hackberry	2	Tree	+	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	+	+	-	-	>10'	40-6	0'

The RI Native Plant Guide (<u>http://web.uri.edu/rinativeplants</u>) now <u>does</u> include information on each species' <u>edibility</u> (see the "ED" column below), and the list is sortable by category (i.e., the image below is the beginning of an alphabetical listing of all the edible plants in the database.)



College of the Environment and Life Sciences

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	Search
	About
	Glossary
	Acknowledgements
	Resources
1	Contact
	RI Native Plant Guide
	developed in collaboration wit
1	the Rhode Island Natural
	History Survey and their Rhody
	Native Initiative.
	RHODE ISLAND
	NATURAL HISTORY SURVEY
	Previding Ecosystem Science and Information
	ODY NAX
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Database Search Results:					V		P030				
Latin Name	Common Name	Ť	FS	SH	ED	MD	BD	PL.	DT	WT	CT
Acer rubrum	red maple	Т	Х	х	X	х	x	Х	х	Х	Х
Acer saccharinum	silver maple	Т	Х	Х	Х			Х		Х	
Acer saccharum var. saccharum	sugar maple	т	х	х	х	х	х	х			
Allium canadense	meadow garlic	Ρ		Х	Х				Х	Х	
Allium tricoccum var. tricoccum	ramps, wild leek	Ρ		х	x	х					
Amelanchier arborea	common serviceberry, downy shadbush	т	х	x	х		x	x	х	х	х
Amelanchier canadensis	Canadian serviceberry, eastern shadbush	S	х	х	х		х	х	х	х	х
Amelanchier laevis	smooth serviceberry, smooth shadbush	S	x	x	х	х	x	x	х	х	x
Amelanchier spicata	dwarf serviceberry, dwarf shadbush	s	х	х	х		х	х	х	х	х
Angelica atropurpurea	purple-stemmed angelica	Ρ	х	Х	Х	х		Х		Х	х
Apios americana	common groundnut	V	Х	х	X	х			х	х	

The former "<u>Rhody Native</u>" Program informed people about local nurseries where many of the plants listed in the RI Native Plant Guide were ethically propagated and available for purchase. While Rhody Native ceased operations in 2020 due to funding shortfalls, a successor initiative of sorts, <u>Reseeding Rhode Island</u>, was recently launched by the RI Wild Plant Society (RIWPS).

► Take-home message from this talk: the "you can eat it too" attribute of many native species offers a powerful incentive for people and organizations to "go native" in their landscaping, that were insufficiently swayed to do so by the ecological rationale alone.





Two resources helpful in figuring out which species are/are not native to your region:

the "Go Botany" website (<u>https://gobotany.nativeplanttrust.org</u>), set up and maintained by the Native Plant Trust (formerly the New England Wild Flower Society); and
the book <u>Flora Novae Angliae</u>, by Native Plant Trust research botanist Arthur Haines.





Another factor to consider is the ecoregion from which the seed, or plants grown from that seed, originate, as well as the ecoregion of the planting location. In general, the more closely-matched these are, as well as local ecotype, the greater the chance that your plantings will succeed and make a positive contribution to the ecology of the places where the new seed or plants are planted.



See also The Importance of Local Ecotype: Guidelines for the Selection of Native Plants

The Maine-based Wild Seed Project website, <u>http://www.wildseedproject.net</u>, is a good source for "local ecotype" seed, as well as very helpful advice on how to propagate plants from that seed.

HABITAT-CREATING HANDPICKED

1 1 1

Wild Seed

Project

Seventy five species of seeds from locally grown native plants. Photos, planting instructions, and propagation information on the package and through our website.

AUTUMN & WINTER SEED SOWING IN NINE EASY STEPS



Seed of edible native species available from the <u>Wild Seed Project</u> include:

- Bunchberry Chamaepericlymenum canadense
- Wild Bergamot Monarda fistulosa
- Wild Leek/Ramps Allium tricoccum
- Wild Lettuce Lactuca canadensis
- Wild Strawberry Fragaria virginiana

Click <u>here</u> for an article by the WSP's Heather McCargo on why and how to grow native plants from seed.

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Ouick Search

Comptonia peregrina

sweet-fern

Comptonia's leaves emanate a slightly citrusy, pungently herbal aroma. This species is in fact a woody shrub, a good option for those who love aromatic plants or for planting in relative shade, it also pairs beautifully with broad-leafed groundcovers.



Return to Plant Search Home

Height: 1-3 ft

Spread: 2-5 ft

Hardiness Zone: 2-6

Bloom Color: Insignificant

Characteristics & Attributes



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(from Nancy Turner, ethnobotanist:)"The Malecite Indians of New Brunswick call Ostrich Fern mahsos, which refers to the circling movement a dog makes as it lies down". This could apply to the circular, vase-like growing habit of the cluster of mature fronds; the circular form of the edible fiddleheads; or both.



Alluvial (silty) floodplain soil – ideal Ostrich Fern habitat



Note vase-shape of unrolling fronds, plus pair of fertile fronds (see arrows)

If you've bought fiddleheads at the store (where they are often several days or even weeks old), and haven't liked them, you might want to try preparing them "sweet corn" style, i.e., as soon as possible after picking. Here Beth Bazler took a camp stove to a patch of Ostrich fern fiddleheads along the Connecticut River and cooked them up just 10 minutes after we picked them. They were yummy!



I have not attempted to propagate Ostrich Ferns from spores. I purchase plants (they are readily available at native plant nurseries, some conventional nurseries, and even at some Garden Club spring plant sales, where surplus plants are dug out of members' yards). While the species' natural habitat is alluvial floodplain soil, it can do well in a wider range of sites (such as this sloping suburban back yard).



Marsh Marigold (aka before the plant bloo water) are edible and

Marsh Marigold is easily propagated by seed. Collect the seed when it is ripe and the pods split open (typically the first part of June), and then sow right away, or store in a plastic bag in the fridge for sowing later.

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This native member of the Allium (Onion/Garlic) genus was extensively used by Native Americans. The city names for both Chicago and Winooski (VT) were likely derived from Native American names for places where this species grew in abundance.

Wild Leek (Ramps) - Allium tricoccum



Wild Leeks (aka Ramps - Allium tricoccum) - note the Dutchman's Breeches leaves in the lower left corner (see arrow), another spring ephemeral species that shares a similar preference for "rich woods" (neutral pH) habitat.



Close-up view of five individual Wild Leek plants: two (occasionally three) large leaves, growing out from a small subterranean bulb



Commercial harvesting and sale of wild leek (ramp) bulbs, or whole plants dug up with the bulbs attached, on a large-scale basis, is of questionable sustainability, at least in some locations where the plant grows – click <u>here</u> for more details



Photo taken at the Blue Hill at Stone Barns Restaurant, Pocantico Hills, NY

Photo taken in the produce section of the Berkshire Food Co-op, Great Barrington, MA The good news: Wild Leeks/Ramps can be propagated (e.g., in a stockbed, such as this one at Garden in the Woods pictured below); a modest amount of plants are periodically extracted from the stockbed, and then it is left to replenish itself before being harvested from again.

Common Milkweed (Asclepias syriaca) – the "procrastinating forager's dream food"



Boiled Milkweed Flower buds - ready to eat as is or incorporate into other dishes, like Milkweed Egg Puff (see below)





Milkweed pods at the edible stage (up to 1.5 inches long and nice and firm to the touch, not "springy" or "spongy")



Monarchs also munch on Milkweed



Milkweed can be deployed in home landscapes, such as along a driveway (like mine in the photo below). Sprouting plants can be thinned in the spring, and potted up for planting elsewhere.



Basswood (*Tilia americana*) – the young leaves from all *Tilia* species are edible raw, and the fresh or dried flowers make a pleasant-tasting tea with multiple medicinal properties – bees and other pollinators like them too



Sassafras (Sassafras albidum) - note the three different- shaped leaf types: no-thumb, one-thumbed, and two-thumbed, making it exceedingly easy to recognize. Scratch and sniff the aromatic root or twig bark (if necessary) for further confirmation



Sassafras shoots with the root portions peeled (peelings are in the bowl) the peelings are used to make Sassafras tea, Sassafras candy and other "root beer" flavored items



Young Sassafras Leaves at the right stage for making Filé powder



Sassafras leaves can produce some beautiful fall colors



Juneberry/Shadbush/Serviceberry, Amelanchier spp. - an early-blossoming tree (a week or two before apples/crabapples) - flowering time is also a good time to spot (and remember) the trees for later fruit-picking opportunities



Juneberry (Shadbush/Serviceberry) - Amelanchier canadensis and other species fruit is purple when ripe and tastes like a cross between a cherry and an almond





One of the fun (and yummy) items to make from, Juneberries, Beach Plums and other wild fruit strudel Juneberry (Amelanchier spp.) seed, obtained via the "extraction by mouth" method (i.e., I ate the sweet pulp surrounding the seeds), after collecting the ripe fruit the last week of June.



Following this process, the seeds were stored in small plastic bags, mixed with a little moist vermiculite, and then placed in my stratification fridge. At least half of the seed "woke up" (i.e., radicles emerged) the following January, though, so I had to sow those seeds right away. By February, the first true leaves had emerged. I moved the plants outside once the weather warmed up in the spring.



Wild Strawberry (Fragaria virginiana) - while the berries are small, they are exceptionally tasty. The leaves (when fresh or thoroughly dried) can be used for tea. While wild strawberry plants can tolerate some shade, the fruit production will be better in sunny, grassy areas. This species certainly has great potential for adding to many home and other landscapes, including (natural) lawns.



Photo by Donald Cameron

Wild strawberries propagate easily from seed, sown indoors or outdoors.


On 3/31/16, I brought the seeds of Wild Strawberry and several other edible native species to Miss Hall's School in Pittsfield, MA, and worked with Greenhouse manager Marian Rutledge and her students to sow them (into used produce containers, such as the one at right). The Wild Strawberries germinated and grew well, and the plants were big enough for the students to sell them at their May plant sale. Marian says the plants were a "bit hit" with their customers.





Common or Dooryard Violet, Viola sororia, another great way to diversify a lawn with a native species that doesn't mind getting mowed or stepped on. Violet leaves are edible raw or cooked and are high in Vitamins A and C. The flowers are also edible: raw (added to salads, e.g.), or candied (for use in decorating other foods).



While Viola sororia can be propagated by seed, I have not yet attempted to do that. Instead, I go to the lawn in my back yard, where the species self-sows profusely, and dig up and pot up plants for planting elsewhere (see photos).



Flowering Raspberry (Rubus odoratus) - an attractive, thornless bramble -Has flavorful fruit (though a bit on the dry side)



Flowering Raspberry fruit - the pulp on the ripe fruit (see arrows) is thin and a bit on the dry side, but has a decent flavor and can be eaten raw or used in cooking





Black Raspberry (Rubus occidentalis) - not a showy flower, but tastier fruit, and its purplish-colored canes add "off-season" interest to the landscape



Common or Black Elderberry (Sambucus canadensis), at (edible) blossom stage





A non-alcoholic

Elderberry Borer Beetle (Desmocerus palliatus)

I don't (yet) know where they source their elder flowers from, but I am concerned

Elderberry (Sambucus canadensis) - ripe fruit is edible after cooking or drying



Elderberry grows easily from seed. I started some indoors in January, and the larger seedlings (left) were ready to be moved to a larger pot by March (right).

Note roots coming out of the bottom of the pot 🕨

Wild Bergamot or Bee-Balm (Monarda fistulosa) - A savoryflavored (sage or thyme-like) native wild mint, popular with longtongued bumblebees and other pollinators. Like most mints, this species can spread assertively, a desirable trait when you are reclaiming a site from invasive or otherwise undesirable species. This species also grows readily from seed.





Another nice native wild mint for deploying in the landscape is **Broad-leaved Mountain Mint**, aka Pycnanthemum muticum. Besides having a sharp, peppermint-y aroma and flavor, this species, like most of its cousins in the Mint family, is a veritable insect magnet, such as for the Great Blue Wasp (<u>Sphex pensylvanicus</u>).



Sweet Goldenrod (Solidago odora) - the leaves and flowers have a licorice-like flavor. This is one of the native species the American Colonists made tea from when they were boycotting the British tea during the Revolutionary War era.



Sweet Goldenrod (*Solidago odora*) grows readily from seed; no stratification is required. Here I have just transplanted baby *S. odora* plants that self-sowed in the summer, from a plug I obtained and potted up from the New England Wild Flower Society.



Sweet Fern (Comptonia peregrina) - not a true fern, but related to Bayberry (and shares its aromatic nature and tolerance of poor soils, due to its roots' ability to fix nitrogen) - another of the native species the American Colonists turned to to make tea from during the Revolutionary War era - the seeds inside the burrs (see arrows) are also edible





Spicebush (Lindera benzoin) - yet another of the "Revolutionary tea" plants - the dried berries make a fine Black or Szechuan Pepper-like substitute

- Migrating birds like these high-energy berries, though, so be sure to leave some on the plant
- Spicebush likes to grow as an understory plant in hardwood forests, often near streams

As Spicebush is dioecious (male and female flowers are borne on separate plants), make sure you plant at least one female if you want to get berries

Spicebush can be grown from seed. Instead of drying the fruit (as you would to use it as a savory spice), you need to keep the berries moist at room temperature and allow the pulp to soften and ferment for at least a few weeks. Next, clean the pulp off the seed, and then (unless you sow it outside in the fall), store the cleaned seed (mixed with a little damp vermiculite or the like) in a plastic bag in the fridge, and then sow in the spring. (Note how the flat is wrapped with hardware cloth, to protect the sown seed from ravenous rodents).



Spicebush (along with Sassafras) also serves a host plant for the cool-looking <u>Spicebush Swallowtail</u> (Papilio troilus) caterpillar - another reason why you might want to consider adding this species to your property if it isn't already there.





Photo taken at my native plant nursery

At an earlier instar (younger stage), the caterpillar seeks to imitate a bird dropping





Even the pupa stage of this species is cool-looking, as it bears a striking resemblance to a dried leaf (this photo was also taken at my nursery).



Wintergreen (Gaultheria procumbens), also called Teaberry or Checkerberry

Berries are edible yearround, and the leaves can be used for tea (the new, reddishgreen, tender leaves are best for this look for them in late spring)



Black or Sweet Birch (Betula lenta) - can be nibbled or drunk; the closelyrelated Yellow Birch (Betula alleghaniensis) can be used exactly the same way.





Black or Yellow Birch trees (indeed, any goodsized tree of any Birch species) can also be tapped for sap, which can be drunk as is or boiled down to make a molasses-like syrup **>** ▲ Wintergreenflavored "tea"
(steeped at room temperature)
made from peeled
Black or Yellow
Birch twigs and
peelings



The seed of Black and Yellow Birch trees is borne in structures called **strobiles**. The trees shed their ripe seed from these strobiles throughout the fall/winter. One good time to collect this seed is after a snowfall; you can pick the seed right off the surface of the snow. The seed is then sown on the surface of the growing medium (it needs light to germinate), and kept indoors or planted directly outdoors.



May Apple (Podophyllum peltatum) - the fully ripe fruit (available August-September) is edible and delicious raw and can be made into marmalade, sorbet, chiffon pie and other desserts. The plants tolerate shade well and spread naturally, so they are a good choice for planting along woodland pathways*. Another plus: deer are not fond of them.





May Apple flowers (and, eventually, the fruit) are located in the crotch between the double-branched stalks (see arrow).

* Two nearby locations where you can encounter this species are Lincoln Park in Lexington and the Acton Arboretum. Nannyberry (Viburnum lentago) - a shrub that likes damp, meadowy areas - the fruit ripens in September and resembles stewed prunes in flavor and texture





Wild Raisin (Viburnum nudum or cassinoides) – can tolerate drier, rockier soils (still likes sun) - produces pretty clusters of edible fruit (ripe when purple)



Hobblebush or Moosewood (Viburnum alnifolium , aka V. lantanoides) – a common understory plant in cool, northern hardwood forests – pretty spring flowers, and fruit with a stewed prune, clove-spiced flavor ripe (when black) in late summer







... and Hobblebush leaves can put on quite a colorful show in the fall





Staghorn Sumac - Rhus typhina (or hirta) All red-berried Sumacs native to New England are edible - that includes Smooth Sumac, Rhus glabra, and Winged (aka Shining) Sumac, Rhus copallinum.

Poison Sumac (*Toxicodendron vernix*) note that the leaves lack teeth, the leaf stems are reddish-colored, and the greenish-white berries are borne in loose, drooping clusters



<u>To make Sumacade:</u>

- (1) Place berry clusters in a bowl;
- (2) Add 1-2 quarts lukewarm or colder water;
- (3) Knead /rub the berry clusters in the water for 4-
 - 5 minutes (see how the water takes on a pinkishorange color);
- (4) remove and discard the spent berries;
- (5) pour the liquid through a paper towel or equivalent filter; and
- (6) Serve the Sumacade hot or cold, sweetened or unsweetened (I usually serve it cold and sweetened, like lemonade).







Sumacade (aka "Rhus Juice" or Indian Lemonade).

Staghorn Sumac propagates easily from seed - perhaps too easily. About 8 years ago, I made the mistake of putting some spent R. typhina berries in my compost pile. I am still getting sumac plants sprouting from that seed in my raised beds where I use my "finished" compost. So now I just pot those Sumac babies up, and grow them out for planting elsewhere.



Staghorn Sumac produces brilliant autumn plumage



Wild Grapes - Riverside and Fox (Concord) Grape, Vitis riparia and V. labrusca



This photo is of a Fox Grape vine laden with ripe fruit, which are often first detected by smell



A basket of Fox Grapes, Vitis labrusca

Wild Grape Cheesecake with a Wild Hazelnut Crust and a Wild Grape Glaze



Riverside Grape (*Vitis riparia*) - while this species also produces edible fruit, suitable for jams and jellies, its grapes are smaller and not as tasty raw as the Fox Grape.



Riverside Grape (Vitis riparia) leaves (note smooth, green undersides) at the right stage for stuffing


Stuffed Riverside Grape Leaves



Starry False Solomon's Seal (Maianthemum stellatum) in flower and fruit - the ripe, deep-red-colored berries are edible* and taste like cranberries sweetened with molasses (*in moderation)







Common Hazelnut (Corylus americanus) flowers, husks and nuts







Beaked Hazelnut - Corylus cornuta



While Hazelnuts (*C. americana* or *cornuta*) readily grow from seed, the nuts are "hydrophilic", meaning they will lose their viability if allowed to dry out. They should be sown outdoors soon after collecting, or may be cold moist stratified for up to a year, or possibly longer, and then sown in the spring. Do not forget to protect sown nuts from rodents. I use a half-inch mesh metal hardware cloth for this purpose; the sprouts can grow through the mesh. Leave the mesh on until the nut has been completely used up by the developing tree.

The best place I know to find lots of common Hazelnuts: under power lines The best time to gather Hazelnuts: the second week of September, when the nearly-ripe nuts are still on the bushes.

Hazelnut plants often grow in dense thickets, such as the one below.

Oaks/Acorns (Quercus alba and other spp.) - note the rounded lobes on the White Oak leaves on the left, versus the pointy lobes of the other oak leaf, which produces more bitter acorns due to higher tannic acid levels



White Oak (Quercus alba) acorns start sprouting soon after falling off the trees in late September, so they can't be stored in a stratification fridge for longer than a month without their radicles rotting. So better to sow them soon after collecting them in the fall, and protect the sown nuts from rodents and other

critters.





Powcohickora, a delicious porridge, one of the dishes

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made by indigenous peoples of this region from pounded nuts (Shagbark Hickory nuts in this case) - hence the origin of the word "Hickory". A basketful of freshly-gathered Shagbark Hickory Nuts, some still in their husks, and one still attached to the tree (see photo at right) – and a close-up (below), showing the four-parted husks, the de-husked shells, and a pair of nut meat halves extracted from a shelled nut (note the penny for scale).







Maple Hickory Nut Pie

Examples of three cookie recipes utilizing Shagbark Hickory Nuts:



Thumbprint Cookies, filled with Wild Fruit Jelly (left) Hickory Nut Wafer Cookies (center) Triple Maple Hickory Nut Sandwich Cookies (right) While Shagbark Hickory readily grows from seed (I have been getting about an 80% germination rate on the nuts I have planted), the nuts are "hydrophilic", meaning they will lose their viability if allowed to dry out. They should be sown outdoors soon after collecting, or may be cold moist stratified for up to a year, or possibly longer, and then sown in the spring. Do not forget to protect sown nuts from rodents. I use a half-inch mesh metal hardware cloth for this purpose; the sprouts can grow through the mesh (see below). Leave the mesh on until the nut has been completely used up by the developing tree.



I sow C. ovata nuts in 14"-deep "Treepots", to accommodate the species' notoriously-long taproots. Four of these otherwise very tippy Treepots fit very snugly into a standard milk crate.



C. Ovata nuts begin to sprout within a week after being moved from cold to warm moist stratification. Black Walnut (Juglans nigra) - while deemed by some not to be native to Massachusetts, this species <u>is</u> considered to be native to Connecticut, within the same ecoregion (Area 59, aka the Northeastern Coastal Zone) that also extends into Massachusetts. Nevertheless - Black Walnut trees can now be found throughout the state, especially in/near farms and cities.



Basket full of Black Walnuts, (mostly) still in their husks



De-husked Black Walnuts, nestled in a bowl made from Black Walnut wood, ready for shelling, separating the nut meats from the shells and eating as is or for use in various recipes





Black Walnut shells are notoriously hard to crack open; they will break most conventional nutcrackers. Here's the device I use to open Black Walnuts; you can also use a hammer or vise to get them open.



The assertive, aromatic flavor of Black Walnuts pairs well with honey, as in these desserts: Black Walnut Baklava and Black Walnut Honey Squares



Pawpaw (Asimina triloba) - while the native range of this species lies to the south and west of New England, Pawpaw trees planted in/around the Boston area can do quite well, producing dozens of luscious, custardy fruits in early fall. Unless there are other Pawpaw trees nearby, though, you'll want to plant trees of two unrelated varieties to get good pollination and fruit set.









Examples of other trees native to the Northeast U.S. that provide edible nuts, seeds and/or fruit (clockwise, from upper right): Hackberry; Butternut; Beechnut; Hawthorn; Chestnut; Persimmon; and Tupelo.









Groundnut - Apios americana



Groundnut "beans" (left) and tubers (right)



One fun and easy way to cook Groundnuts: slice thinly and then pan fry in oil until golden to make Groundnut Chips







Jerusalem Artichoke (Helianthus tuberosus) in flower



Jerusalem Artichoke tubers (note golf ball for scale)



- Since the summer of 2015, after retiring from 25+ years working to protect rivers at the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game, I have taken on the role of 'Johnny Appleseed' for edible native plants.
- I have set up a nursery (near where I grew up, in Weston, MA), where I am propagating and growing over 1,000 plants, many of which I have grown from seed I gathered myself.
- I am then partnering with land trusts, cities and towns, state and federal agencies, schools and colleges, tribal groups and others to plant plants from my nursery on appropriate places on their properties.

Profile of me that appeared in the Spring 2019 issue of the Wild Ones Journal.



Meet the 'Johnny Appleseed' of native edible plants

Cohen says the "you can eat it too" attribute of many native species offers a powerful incentive for people and organizations to "go native" in their landscaping.

By Barbara A. Schmitz Russ Cohen grew up at the end of a dead-end street in a woodsy suburb west of Boston, spending loads of time in the woods and developing a natural bond with nature.

But it was first as a sophomore in high school that connecting to nature by nibbling on it became his passion. As a 16-year-old, Cohen recalls taking a mini-class on edible botany that ignited his lifelong af-

Russ Cohen shows off some of the native plants growing inside his nursery.

<u>Edible Wild Plants Native to the Northeast U.S. and E. Canada</u> is a compilation I put together on the >180 species, edible in whole or in part by humans, that are native to the ecoregions covering/extending into New England and adjacent areas of eastern Canada. Below is a sample of the info contained in that document.

Edible Plant Species Native to the Northeast U.S. and E. Canada		o the	Friday, February 21, 2020 10:17:35 AM	
Common Name	Botanical Name	Native or	Preferred habitat	Comments
Box Elder	Acer negundo	Native	wetlands and other damp areas; floodplains	a species of Maple; sap may be tapped + boiled down for syrup
Maple, Red	Acer rubrum	Native	red maple swamps (of course)	can be tapped for sap like Sugar Maple
Maple, Silver	Acer saccharinum	Native	forested floodplains and other wet ground	can be tapped for sap like Sugar Maple; seeds are edible raw
Maple, Sugar	Acer saccharum	Native	hardwood forests; roadsides	sap is source of maple syrup and sugar
Sweet Flag (Calamus)	Acorus•americanus	Native	wet fields and meadows; sunny wetlands; along waterways	the similarly-appearing A. calamus is apparently non-native to MA
Meadow Garlic	Allium canadense	Native	river floodplains, forests	all tender parts of the plant (leaves, flowers, bulbs) are edible
Wild Chives	Allium schoenoprasum	Native*	floodplains, meadows and fields, ridges or ledges, shores of rivers or lakes	*species is deemed to be nonnative to s. New Eng. + rare in N. New Eng., so use caution when picking
Wild Leek (Ramps)	Allium tricoccum	Native	rich, mesic woods, such as those pref. by maidenhair fern + Dutchman's breeches	over-collecting by commercial diggers is harming ramps + habitat - pick 1 leaf/plant only
luneberry/Shadbush	Amelanchier spp.	Native	likes to grow near water, but often planted in parks and other landscaped areas	fruit ripe in late June; flavor is a cross between cherries and almonds
Hog Peanut	Amphicarpaea bracteata	Native	damp spots in woods w/ some sun; often on old woods roads	small subterranean seeds are available from late summer onward; tiny peas may be edible too
Angelica	Angelica atropurpurea	Native	wet ground along rivers and streams, in full or partial sun	tender, emerging leaves are edible raw or cooked, young, boiled stems are sometimes candied
Seacoast Angelica	Angelica lucida	Native	rocky areas near the ocean	tender, emerging leaves are edible raw or

Views of portions of the nursery I have established to grow edible native plants I have propagated from seed (see, e.g., the Beach Plum seedlings in the milk cartons) as well as plants I have obtained from elsewhere, such as from the Native Plant Trust (formerly the New England Wild Flower Society).



Wild Lettuce (Lactuca canadensis) Note the finger-like terminal lobes of this species, which helps to tell it apart from the other (bitter, but still edible) Lactuca species. L. canadensis is easily propagated from seed, usually available from late August into September.





Rhoda Cohen (Russ' mother) with a tray of seed-grown Wild Lettuce plants she helped Russ transplant into larger pots



A couple of peeks inside the stratification fridge in our basement, where I store seeds that need a prolonged cold period in order to break their dormancy. I check the contents periodically to look for seeds that have "woken up".



A list of some of the places where I have been planting edible native plants in New England over the past five years:

• Planted Beach Plums on The Trustees of Reservations' Crowninshield Island, Marblehead, MA

 Planted a variety of edible native species along trails and field edges of the Essex National Heritage Area's land holdings on Bakers Island, Salem, MA

• Planted beach plums, persimmons, shagbark hickories, Sassafras and other native edibles along the trails serving the two new <u>AMC/DCR</u> paddler access campsites on the Connecticut River in Whately and Montague, MA

Planted a variety of edible native species at Graylag Cabins, Pittsfield, NH

 Planted a variety of edible native species in conjunction with a Trout Unlimitedcoordinated culvert replacement project on Falls Brook, Swanzey, NH

 Planted Beach Plums, Sweet Goldenrod, Wild Strawberry, Rose Mallow and Milkweed at the Cohasset Conservation Trust's Bassing Beach in Scituate, MA

 Planted 10 species of edible natives along the trails and field edges of the Westport Land Conservation Trust's Mill Pond Conservation Area in Westport, MA

• Planted a variety of native edible plants along the trails and field edges of the Essex County Greenbelt Association's Cox Reservation, Essex, MA; and

• Planted a variety of edible native plants at the Acton Arboretum, Acton, MA

Planting Beach Plums on Crowninshield (aka Brown's) Island, Marblehead, MA, a 10-acre island owned by The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR). The numbers indicate the approximate location of where the plums were eventually planted.







A <u>reconnaissance trip to the island on 8/28/15</u> revealed several locations which appeared to be suitable habitat for Beach Plums.



After getting the OK from The Trustees, I purchased fourteen local ecotype, wild-seed-propagated Beach Plum plants from the New England Wild Flower Society, then headed out to the island on 11/10/15 to locate and predig the holes into which the Beach Plums will be planted.





Volunteer Jonathan Gawrys (of SumCo Engineering of Salem, MA) carting out some of the fourteen Beach Plum bushes over to Crowninshield Island across the mud flat at low tide on November 18



Volunteers from the Marblehead Conservancy planting the Beach Plums, and trimming back invasive buckthorn and bittersweet to help make room for them



Summer 2020 update: about six of the original 14 Beach Plum bushes are still alive, and several bushes are producing fruit.
<u>Planting Edible Native Species on the Essex National Heritage Area's</u> <u>property on Bakers Island</u>, Salem, Summer 2016 and onward











Kristen Sykes of AMC helping me plant native edibles at a new Connecticut River paddler access campsite in Whately, MA



Connecticut River Paddlers' Trail

i series of access points and primitive campsites along the Connecticut River, spanning from it's source to the ex-

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River Photos



Whately Oaks Primitive Campsite

Site Steward: Appalachian Noventain Club

Volunteer adopter: Fran Fortino

Site Description: Features two text platforms and a pricy. Suitable for large groups.

More Info:

Home

No potable water, Register at http://gom.gl/Norms /ND2NcWPOrt.Com021 Competite Rules: Paddle Access Only, No Notorcoed Buets! Two Hight Maximum Stay. First Come, First Served, Ten Person, Four Tent Limit on The Site. Carry In, Carry Out. Foiline Leave No Tace Principles.



Location Whately, MA Make a Donation

Location



e2017 Geoge Image's e2017 Tenadetros



Transporting new edible species (like Hobblebush and Flowering Raspberry) for planting at the new AMC/DCR paddler access campsite in Montague, located on a bluff overlooking the Connecticut River. The photo at right shows the wooden stairway leading from the river up to the campsite. Spicebush (in the foreground) was already present at the site, so no need to plant that one.







▲ Volunteers planting native plant species along the banks of the Housatonic River, just east of downtown Great Barrington, MA as part of the <u>River Walk</u> community project (click <u>here</u> for a list of species).





▼I have contributed edible native species for planting at River Walk, and the photo below was taken at a wild edibles walk I led along that pathway a number of years ago.



Sara Quintal, of the Buzzards Bay Coalition, with Marsh Marigold (Caltha palustris) plants I had provided and she and I had planted in the spring of 2017, at the Coalition's Sawmill property in Acushnet, MA. We planted many other edible native species at that property later that year.





Another example: Willard's Woods in Lexington MA, where a stream flowing through a failed culvert was "daylighted" (brought to the surface). I was asked by the Town in 2017 to recommend edible native species as part of post-construction site restoration plantings.





What is Stream Daylighting?

In urban design and urban planning, daylighting is the redirection of a stream into an above-ground channel. Typically, the goal is to restore a stream of water to a more natural state. Daylighting is intended to improve the environment for a stream which had been previously diverted into a culvert, pipe, or a drainage system.

Outlet of Willard Pond.

Why Do This Here?

The existing Willard Woods stone drainage culvert was failing and required replacement. This effort will both accommodate drainage needs but also improve habitat value. The Willard's Woods stream daylighting project was identified as a priority project during Town-wide watershed and stream assessment planning and is a part of Lexington Public Works efforts across the community to enhance drainage systems in an ecologically-appropriate way. Find out more here: http://www.lexingtomma.gov/conservation/stormwater.cfm



The Project Also Includes:

 Construction of a pedestrian bridge across the "new" stream.

 Construction of a vehicular bridge (for fire access) on the trail to Brent Road.



Willard Stream below North Street.

Temporary Impacts to Trail:

- The trails around the stream daylighting project (area around Willard's Pond) will be temporarily closed during construction.
- The trail from Brent Road into Willard's Woods will be closed for the Fall. Thank you for your patience.



Brent Road trail access to be replaced.

Project Schedule: • start

Late August/Early September 2015
• End

Late Fall, 2015

Final Plantings and Invasive Plant Management
 - Through Spring 2016

Lexington Fublic Works Director: Bill Hadley Lexington Town Engineer: John Linsey Lexington Consension Administrator: Karen Mullims Construction Contractor: SumCo Engineer: Woodand & Curran, Inc. Landscape Architect: Regins & Leonard Landscape Architecture & Design Fundris: Town of Lexington

For More Information, contact John Livsey jlivsey@lexingtonma.gov

Here is the planting plan I came up with (see below). I looked for clues in the existing landscape and plant matrix to come up with my recommendations for which species ought to be happy if planted in which specific locations.



On 4/28/17, Lexington Conservation Lands Manager Jordan McCarron (at r.), along with Town volunteers and workers for the Town's landscape contractor (SumCo Engineering), assisted me in putting in the edible native plants I had recommended for the site. The plants that were planted were a combination of plants SumCo sourced from its suppliers (paid for by the Town) and plants I donated from my nursery (mostly consisting of species I had in stock that SumCo was unable to obtain from its suppliers).



I picked a partially-shaded, sloping bank along the daylighted stream to plant some Flowering Raspberries (see photo below). This is the type of habitat I usually see this species growing in when I encounter it in the wild.



Here are the plants 18 months later (see photo at right - note bridge over the daylighted stream in the background), looking very happy, and blending right in to the landscape, looking as if they had always been there.







Fall 2018: Scoping out locations for native edibles @ Holly Hill Organic Farm in Cohasset; farmer Jasmin Callahan planting a Nannyberry; and the wire cages installed to protect the new plants from critter munching



Last but not Least: <u>Native Plant Agriculture</u> is the title of a recently-published book from <u>Indigenous Landscapes</u>, a two-person native plant landscaping business out of Cincinnati, OH.

This book does an excellent job in describing (and illustrating, with great photos) the ecological benefits of native species (particularly which native plant species are food sources for which native insects and birds) that are also edible by people.

Native Plant Agriculture

Applicable to the Midwest, South, Northeast and Mid-Atlantic



Vol. 1 - Responding to Biodiversity Loss and Climate Change with Large Scale Ecological Restoration

Indigenous Landscapes

While the book's primary focus and intention is the conversion of large, conventional, mono-cropped farms (dominating Midwest rural landscapes) into ecologically diverse food systems, much of its content is also applicable to smaller-scale and/or urban/suburban sites in the Northeast.

⊙ The End ⊙

Questions?

More info on Russ' wild edibles walks/talks, recipes, book/articles, etc.: <u>http://users.rcn.com/eatwild/sched.htm</u>

Russ can be reached at <u>eatwild@rcn.com</u>.

Russ' foraging book, <u>Wild Plants I Have Known...</u> and Eaten, is available from its publisher, the Essex County Greenbelt Association, by contacting Ms. Sable Weisman at <u>sweisman@ecga.org</u> or (978) 768-7241 ext. 24.

You can also buy the book online from Greenbelt's online store, <u>http://ecga.org/store</u>, and have it mailed directly to you.

