

There are usually food around you no matter where you go. However, most of us are not experienced in gathering our own food. The first thing you must learn is what NOT to eat since some poisonous plants look very similar to edible plants.

If you do not know what is edible or poisonous, there are a few rules you can apply. All furry animals, common birds, and fish are edible. Lizards and snakes can be eaten after the skin and entrails are removed. If you can't catch the furry animals, watch what they eat. Furry animals know what is edible, unless they have been placed in a new environment and you can eat everything that they eat. However, know that some foods have very little nutritional value to humans, such as grasses.

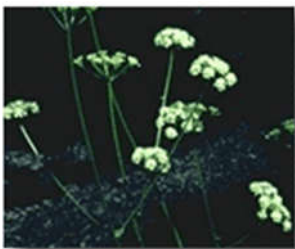
**Warning:** This is only a reference list. Do not use this page as your sole source of information. Plants listed here may be difficult to recognize based on the pictures provided. Do research on each and every plant and take appropriate classes before decided to ingest any wild plants. Many plants have poisonous look alikes. Some plants are edible only when properly prepared. Some plants have both edible and poisonous parts.

All the plants listed here are found in Riverside County.

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### Poisonous Plants

**Poison Hemlock** leaves are extremely nauseating when tasted. It is sometimes confused with water hemlock.



**Water Hemlock** is the most violently toxic plant that grows in North America. Only a small amount of the toxic substance in the plant is needed to produce poisoning in livestock or in humans. The toxin cicutoxin, acting directly on the central nervous system, is a violent convulsant.

**Deathcomas** is the common name of several species of poisonous plants. The more toxic of these species are Grassy Deathcomas, Meadow Deathcomas, Foothill Deathcomas, and Nettle's Deathcomas. People have mistaken Deathcomas for wild onions.



**Castor Bean** consists of an oblong spiny pod which contains three seeds on average. Seeds are oval and light brown, mottled or streaked with light and dark brown and resemble a pinto bean.

**Hemp Dogbane**, a poisonous herb found throughout the United States, including the western range states. The hemp portion of its common name comes from the fact that Indians used fiber from the bark for making rope. It also is called Dogbane, Indian Physic, American Hemp, and Rheumatism Weed.



**False Hellebore** is poisonous but toxicity decreases as the plant matures. The roots are 5 to 10 times as poisonous as leaves or stems. The poisonous substances in false hellebore are alkaloids. Found in San Jacinto Mountains.

All parts of the **Western Bracken Fern**, both green and dry stages, are poisonous.





**Jimsonweed** (also known as Jamestown Weed, Thorn Apple, Devil's Trumpet, Mad Apple, and Stink Weed) is a strong hallucinogen that often kills teenage drug abusers on the first use.

**Chokecherry** has small ripe cherries that range in color from purple to black, but the poison is mostly in leaves.



Young **Pokeweed** leaves and stems are edible if properly cooked. Boil them twice, discarding the water from the first boiling. The fruits are edible if cooked. All parts of this plant are poisonous if eaten raw. Never eat the underground portions of the plant as these contain the highest concentrations of the poisons. Do not eat any plant over 25 centimeters tall or when red is showing in the plant.

Some **Wild Onion & Garlic** are edible and some are poisonous. This is a subject that is beyond the scope of this site.



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## Edible Plants



**Cattails** have been called the most useful of all wild plants as sources of emergency food. Every part of the plant is edible, but some parts are not very nice to eat. The young tender shoots are eaten raw or cooked. The rhizome is often very tough but is a rich source of starch. Pound the rhizome to remove the starch and use as a flour. The pollen is also an exceptional source of starch. When the cattail is immature and still green, you can boil the female portion and eat it like corn on the cob.

All parts the **Dandelion** are edible. Many plants that have milky sap are poisonous, this is not true for dandelions. Eat the leaves raw or cooked. Boil the roots as a vegetable. Dandelions become more bitter with age.



All parts of the **Prickly Pear Cactus** are edible. Many people grow and harvest this wonderful food in their yards. Peel the fruits and eat them fresh or crush them to prepare a refreshing drink. Avoid the tiny, pointed hairs. The pads can be peeled and eaten raw or added to other foods like omelets or casseroles.

**Agave** flowers and flower buds are edible. Boil them before eating. The juice of some species causes a skin rash in some individuals.



The fruits of **Cereus Cactus** are edible, but some may have a laxative effect.

All parts of the **Chicory** plant are edible. Eat the young leaves as a salad or boil to eat as a vegetable. Cook the roots as a vegetable. It is a weed found in disturbed areas.





**Hackberries** are edible when they are ripe and fall from the tree.

The berries and twigs of the **Juniper** tree are edible. Eat the berries raw or use dried and crushed berries as a seasoning for meat. Gather young twigs to make a tea. Many plants may be called cedars but are not related to Junipers and may be harmful. Always look for the berrylike structures, needle leaves, and resinous, fragrant sap to be sure the plant you have is a Juniper.



Young shoots and leaves of **Stinging Nettle** are edible. Boiling the plant for 15 minutes destroys the stinging element of the bristles. This plant is very nutritious. It grows in very wet areas.

**Acorns** are edible, but often contain large quantities of bitter substances. White oak acorns usually have a better flavor than red oak acorns. Gather and shell the acorns. Soak the acorns in water for 2 to 7 days, changing the water twice daily, to remove the bitter substance. Boil the acorns or grind them into flour and use the flour for baking. Tannic acid gives the acorns their bitter taste. Eating an excessive amount of acorns high in tannic acid can lead to kidney failure. Before eating acorns, leach out this chemical through soaking.



The seeds of all **Pine** trees are edible. Pull apart the pine cone to get to the seeds.

**Pincushion Cactus** are a good source of water in the desert. Remove the skin and eat the pulp.



**Manzanita berries** are edible, especially when purplish red.

The fruit of the **California Blackberry** is edible.



**Currants and Gooseberries** are round, have several seeds, are waxy and vary from yellow, red, purple, green or black in color. Gooseberries tend to have spines, while currants tend to lack them.

The berries of **California Holly** are edible but very bland. Do not confuse it with the common Holly that is used for Christmas decorations.





**Miner's lettuce** is usually eaten like salad. It can be green or purplish green.

**Mustard** produces the well known yellow spice but the leaves are also edible.

