



# FIELDBOOK / COOKBOOK

*“Man is an inveterate and incorrigible meddler, never content to leave anything as he finds it, always seeking to alter and – as he sees it – to improve.”*

**-Christopher Lever** author of *They Dined on Eland: The Story of the Acclimatization Societies*

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## **WHY EAT LOCAL INVASIVES?**

*The Society for a Re-Natural Environment (SRNE)* has initiated the *Eat Local Invasives* program to encourage you to incorporate locally invasive plants into your “local” diet.

“Eating local” has gained in popularity as a benefit to both the environment and the economy by using less fuel to transport food and supporting area businesses. Eating invasive species, although still a marginal activity, has also been gaining momentum in recent years.

Invasive species are organisms introduced into a new area outside their native range that cause harm in their new habitat. Unlike other non-native species, invasives pose serious threats because they spread rapidly, crowding and outcompeting other species, greatly reducing biodiversity and compromising the health of local ecosystems. The six invasive plant species highlighted in this program are delicious, nutritious and free. Removing them from the environment and placing them on your dinner plate can reduce the harmful effects these species have on the local ecosystem.

*The SRNE* first became interested in the possibility of eating invasive species through our 2002 project *I'll Have a Starling*. As part of the project, we created a book titled about harvesting, cooking and eating this invasive bird. In 2010 we launched a project about invasive Asian carp in the Midwest, called *On the Impact of Flying Carp*. A major goal of our work was to promote eating this fish – a surprisingly tasty food – to combat its aggressive spread throughout the Mississippi, Missouri and Illinois River systems.

*Eat Local Invasives* marks our largest effort to date and the only one focused exclusively on plants. This program is also the first time we combine the idea of eating invasive species with eating locally. These six plants were selected because they're relatively easy to locate, harvest, and prepare for consumption. For this program, *The SRNE* chose not to promote the killing and eating of invasive animals due to several ethical and practical concerns.

***BD Collier, Founder and President  
The Society for a Re-Natural Environment***

## CONCERNS and BENEFITS

Encouraging people to eat invasive species is controversial even though many individuals, organizations and governmental programs have begun to promote this strategy.

Scientists have voiced a significant concern about this tactic: if we reframe invasive plants and animals as “good food,” we may create market demand that results in their propagation, instead of their reduction or elimination. A second concern is that the plants can be spread unintentionally when people are unfamiliar with specific harvesting practices. *The SRNE* acknowledges and shares these concerns but still endorses the consumption of local invasives as more beneficial than harmful in cumulative impact.

In most cases communities won't be able to eliminate these tough, pervasive plants by eating them. However, this program has additional benefits. It has the power to raise awareness about the problem of invasive species. As a result, it can motivate a larger number of people to help remove the plants whenever and wherever they find them. Removing the plants by hand is far better than using herbicides and chemical poisons, which cause many other environmental problems. Finally, while some people may be motivated to gather plants for the environmental benefits, others will be more responsive when they realize that local invasives have culinary benefits.

## A STRONG WORD OF CAUTION

Harvesting wild edibles requires knowledge and care. You must be careful where and how you collect the plants. Plants growing at polluted sites, like within 25 feet of a paved road, can soak up harmful chemicals that could transfer to you when consumed. It is also important to confirm that the plants were not treated with pesticides. Refer to our poster labels, this field guide, and the website for additional cautions and links to further information.

Never harvest and consume anything unless you are 100% sure you've identified it correctly. Two of our featured plants, wild carrot and wild parsnip, have two related species that are deadly even in small amounts: water hemlock and poison hemlock. *The SRNE* recommends that if you are not absolutely certain what a plant is, don't eat it!



*Garlic mustard, first year growth*

# WARNING! DEADLY POISON!

## Water Hemlock (*Cicuta douglasii*)

This plant resembles both wild parsnip and wild carrot. Learn what it looks like so you can avoid it. It grows in water or wet areas. The smell when you crush the leaves is very unpleasant. All parts of the plant are poisonous.

It is listed by the USDA as one of the most violently toxic plants that grows in North America.



flower



**Water hemlock** from *Flora von Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz* by Prof. Dr. Otto Wilhelm Thomé



**Poison hemlock** from *Köhler's medizinal-pflanzen* by Franz Eugen Köhler

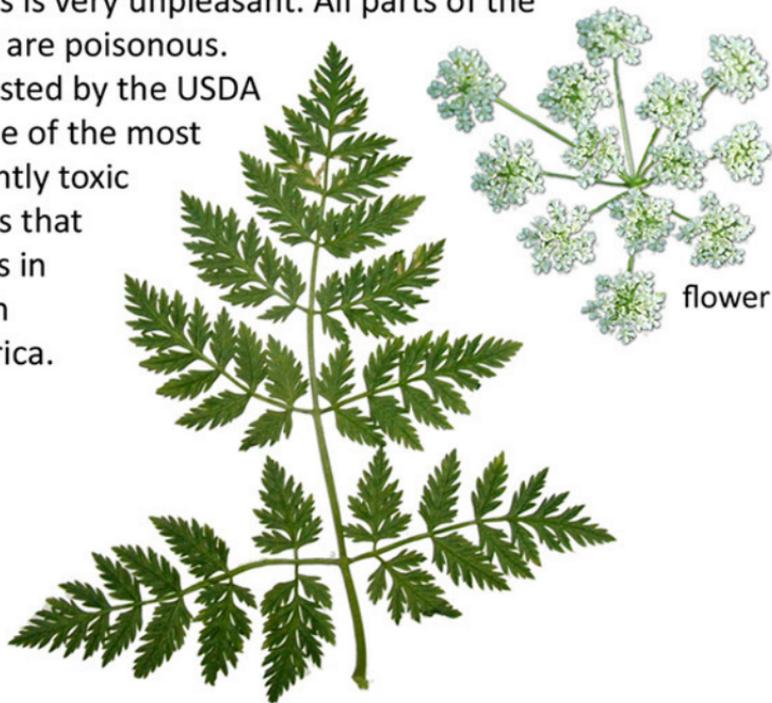


# WARNING! DEADLY POISON!

## Poison Hemlock (*Conium maculatum*)

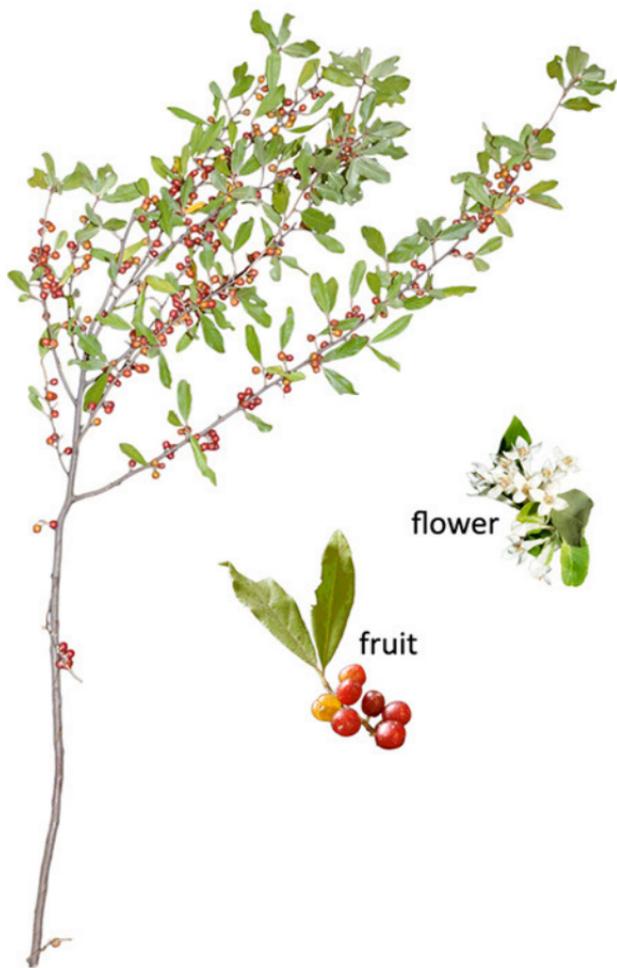
This plant resembles both wild parsnip and wild carrot. Learn what it looks like so you can avoid it. It grows in poorly drained areas near streams, ditches, roadsides & edges of cultivated fields. The smell when you crush the leaves is very unpleasant. All parts of the plant are poisonous.

It is listed by the USDA as one of the most violently toxic plants that grows in North America.



# Autumn Olive

(*Elaeagnus umbellata*)



**Where:**

Found in old fields, open woods, forest edges, roadsides, and other disturbed areas.

**Identification:**

A small, shrubby tree with a dense crown. It sometimes has thorns that form as spur branches. The leaves have silvery scales that turn greener later in the year. Flowers are pale yellow, almost white, and grow in clusters of 1 to 7. Ripe berries are red with silvery scales. The berries are tart, sweet and a bit astringent when eaten raw and get sweeter later in the fall. The berries have at least ten times the antioxidant lycopene than fresh tomatoes.

**When to collect:**

Late summer and fall.

**Which parts are edible:**

Fruit and seeds.

**How to safely discard unused parts:**

Remove as many berries as possible to prevent dispersal by birds and other wildlife. Remove any visible seedlings and mature trees if possible. Burn, compost or discard plants after removing fruit.

*Also known by the names: Japanese silverberry, umbelate oleaster, autumn elaeagnus, or spreading oleaster.*

## **Autumn Olive Jam**

ingredients:

8 c ripe autumn-olives, rinsed and dried

1 c water

3-1/2 c sugar

preparation:

In a large saucepan crush the berries very lightly with a wooden spoon or potato masher. Add the water and bring to a simmer. The seeds are edible and you can keep the fruit whole with the seeds like you would with blackberries. If you want to remove the seeds, cook until berries are just soft enough to press in batches through a strainer or food mill.

If you remove the berries to strain, return the pulp to a clean saucepan over medium heat.

Add the sugar, stirring to dissolve. Keep at a simmer and skim off any foam that forms at the sides and in the middle. When the jam reaches gel point turn off the heat. When fully cooled, pour into sterilized glass jars. Process in hot water bath for 5 minutes.

## **Autumn Olive Apple Chutney**

ingredients:

2 c peeled and chopped tart cooking apples

1-2 c fresh Autumn Olives

1/2 c chopped onion

1/4 c cider vinegar

1/3 c brown sugar

1 T orange zest

1 T freshly grated ginger

1-1/2 t cinnamon

Small pinch of ground clove

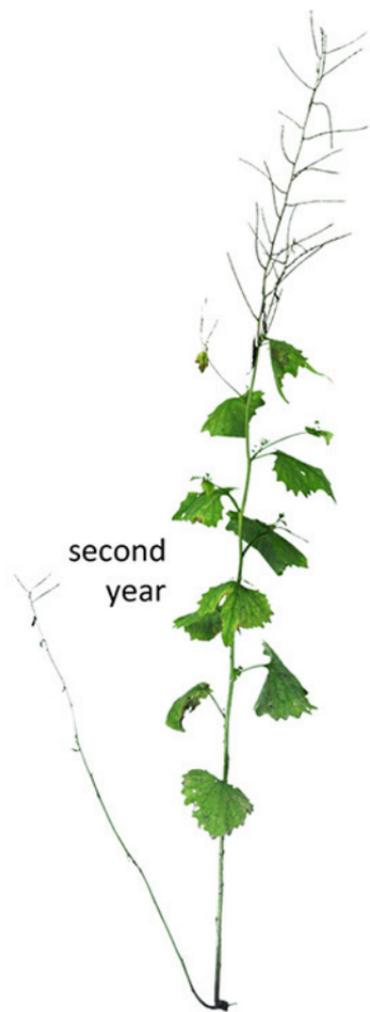
preparation:

Put all ingredients into a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce to a low simmer. Cover and cook for 20 minutes. Uncover and cook for a few minutes more, to reduce any remaining liquid.

Refrigerate up to 2 weeks.

# Garlic Mustard

(*Alliaria petiolata*)



**Where:**

Found in moist shaded areas, forest edges, forest clearings and trailsides.

**Identification:**

Herbaceous plant from 1-3 feet tall. First year plant has rosettes of 3-4 dark green, scallop edged, kidney shaped leaves. Second year plant has serrated edged, pointed leaves with small white flower clusters on one or two flowering stems. Leaves and stems have a garlicky smell when crushed. Taste of raw leaves is reminiscent of garlic and mustard with a bitter edge. Seeds grow in slender capsules 1-2 inches long.

**When to collect:**

Spring, early summer and fall.

**Which parts are edible:**

Leaves and flowers in spring and early summer. Leaves of new growth in late summer and fall. Seeds as soon as they mature in late summer. Root can be used like horseradish.

**How to safely discard unused parts:**

It is best to remove the plants before they go to seed. Do not compost! Be careful not to disperse seeds, because they remain viable for years. Burn or bag and discard unused parts.

## **Garlic Mustard Pesto**

ingredients:

3 c garlic mustard leaves, washed, patted dry, packed in measuring cup

2 large garlic cloves, peeled and chopped

1 c walnuts

1 c olive oil

1 c grated parmesan cheese

1/4-1/3 c grated romano or parmesan cheese

salt & pepper to taste

preparation:

Combine garlic mustard leaves, garlic and walnuts in a food processor and chop. Or you can divide the recipe in half and use a blender. With motor running, add olive oil slowly. Shut off motor then add cheese, salt & pepper, and process briefly to combine. Scrape into refrigerator container and cover. It can be frozen, although the garlic taste will diminish in the freezer.

This makes 2 cups, enough to use as sauce for 2 lbs. of pasta. It's good on crackers as an appetizer. It is also delicious on baked fish. Just spread some on your filets before you bake them.

If the garlic mustard is too strong for you, replace 1-1.5 c with basil.

## **Garlic Mustard-Mustard**

makes about 1/2 c.

ingredients:

7 T ground garlic mustard seeds

2 t apple cider vinegar

1/2 t salt

6 T water

2 t agave syrup or honey

1/4 t tumeric

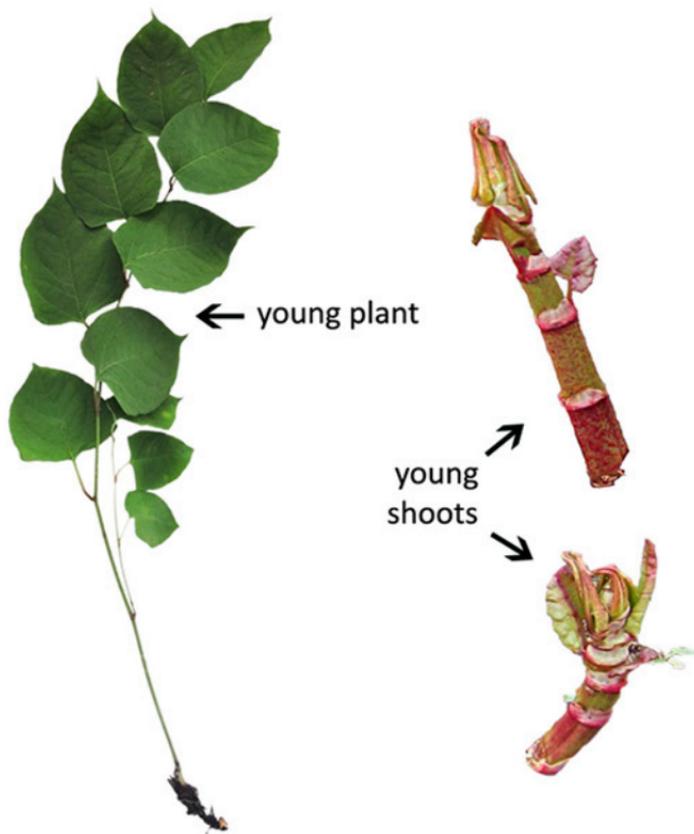
preparation:

Whisk together the ground seeds with the salt and tumeric. Whisk in the water, honey and vinegar until smooth.

Allow the mustard to sit for a week in the refrigerator. It will need to be stirred before use and the color will darken. Keep stored, covered in the fridge for up to a year.

# JAPANESE KNOTWEED

(*Polygonum cuspidatum*)



**Where:**

Found along waterways, roadsides, trailsides and wet forest edges.

**Identification:**

In early spring red/purple asparagus-like shoots emerge from the ground and grow rapidly. Spade shaped leaves unfurl as the plant matures. Stems are green with red speckles, stout, hollow, and cane like. Plants grow in dense thickets 5-8 feet tall, choking everything else out. Flowers are small creamy white to greenish white and grow in plume-like branched clusters near the ends of stems in late summer.

**When to collect:**

Early spring, as soon as new shoots are visible.

**Which parts are edible:**

Young shoots and stems of plants up to two feet tall.

**How to safely discard unused parts:**

Remove as much of the plant as possible. Do not compost! Burn or bag and discard. **Any** fragments left on the ground or put in compost will sprout a new plant.

## Steamed Knotweed Sesame

ingredients:

8 c young Japanese knotweed shoots (about 6" tall)

3 T tamari soy sauce

1 T chili paste or 1/4 t cayenne pepper

6 cloves garlic, crushed

1-2 T sesame oil

6 T toasted sesame seeds

preparation:

If using 1-2 foot tall shoots, peeling may be necessary.

Mix all ingredients except sesame seeds and sesame oil in a bowl. Steam until tender, about 20 minutes. Toss in bowl with oil and sesame seeds. Serve hot as a side dish.



## Japanese Knotweed Dessert Bars

makes a 11" x 7" pan

ingredients:

crust:

1 c flour, 1 c confectioners sugar, 6 T cold butter

filling:

2 large eggs, beaten

2/3 c sugar

1/4 c flour

1 t vanilla

1 t ground cinnamon

1/2 t grated fresh nutmeg

3 c chopped knotweed stalks, leaves removed

preparation:

Heat the oven to 350°F. Grease the 11" x 7" baking pan. In a food processor, pulse the crust ingredients together to resemble coarse crumbs. Press the crumbs into the bottom of the pan evenly. Bake the crust for 12 minutes. For the filling, combine the eggs, sugar, flour, vanilla, and spices with a whisk. Stir in the chopped knotweed pieces and coat them evenly. Pour the filling mixture over the warm crust and spread it evenly. Bake 30-40 minutes, until the egg mixture is set and a toothpick inserted in the middle comes out clean. Cool. Cut into 1" squares and serve.

# Multiflora Rose

(*Rosa multiflora*)



**Where:**

Found along stream banks, pastures, roadsides, savannas, forest edges, and open woodlands.

**Identification:**

Thorny, multi-stemmed flowering shrub. Grows 5-12 feet tall. The flowers are white to pink, fragrant and about 1 inch across. Rose hips grow in clusters, are bright red when ripe and about the size of a pea. The plant spreads mostly by birds eating and dispersing the seeds. The plant can grow as a thicket or climb into the lower branches of trees.

**When to collect:**

Collect leaves and shoots in spring, petals in summer, and rose hips after first heavy frost.

**Which parts are edible:**

Flower petals, ripe rose hips, young leaves and shoots.

**How to safely discard unused parts:**

Remove as much of the plant as possible after harvesting rose hips or flowers. Burn, compost or discard in location where re-sprouting is not possible.

## Multiflora Rose Hip Jelly

ingredients:

8 c ripe rose hips (gathered after first heavy frost)

4 c boiling water

1 package pectin

2-1/2 c sugar

1/4 c lemon juice

preparation:

Bring water to a boil then reduce to a simmer rose hips in water until soft. Crushing slightly before simmering helps infusion. Strain through a jelly bag. Add infusion with all other ingredients to a pot and bring to full rolling boil for approximately 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and skim off foam and add lemon juice.

Pour into hot sterilized jars. Process in hot water bath for 5 minutes.



## Multiflora Rose Petal Ice Cream

### ingredients

1 1/2 c whipping cream

1 1/2 c milk

2/3 c sugar

3 egg yolks

1 t vanilla

2 c Multiflora rose petals

### preparation:

In a medium saucepan stir together the cream, milk, and sugar. Heat over medium heat until sugar is dissolved and mixture is just starting to simmer. Do not boil. Whisk the egg yolks lightly; gradually whisk in about 1 cup of the milk mixture. Pour the egg yolk mixture back into the saucepan. Cook, stirring constantly, over medium heat for 6 to 8 minutes or until mixture thickens and coats the back of a metal spoon. Remove from heat and stir in vanilla. Immediately place in a large bowl of ice water and stir for 2 minutes to cool slightly. Stir in rose petals. Transfer to a storage container; cover and chill overnight.

Strain the custard mixture through a fine mesh sieve; discard solids. Stir liqueur into strained custard. Freeze in a 2-quart ice cream freezer according to manufacturer's directions. Transfer to an airtight storage container and freeze for 4 hours before serving.

# Wild Carrot / Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*)



flower



**Where:**

Found in waste spaces, along roadsides, and in open areas.

**Identification:**

Flower cluster is white and more tightly organized than other similar species. All parts of the plant, most especially the root, has a clear carrot-like smell. Leaves are fine and lacy. When the flower head goes to seed it has the look of a small, light brown bird's nest.

**When to collect:**

Late spring, summer (first year roots, greens and flowers) and fall (for seeds).

**Which parts are edible:**

Flowers, young leaves, seeds and first-year roots.

**How to safely discard unused parts:**

Burn or bag and discard unused parts. Be careful not to disperse seeds.

**WARNING:** The seeds of this plant were historically used as an herbal contraceptive. Women who are nursing, pregnant or trying to get pregnant should not eat any part of this plant. Learn to identify and avoid the deadly similar species, water hemlock and poison hemlock.

## Queen Anne's Lace (Wild Carrot) Flower Jelly

ingredients:

2 c large flower heads, tightly packed

5 c boiling water

1/4 c lemon juice

1 Package powdered pectin for low or no sugar recipes

2-3 c sugar

preparation:

Bring water to boil. Remove from heat. Add flower heads (push them down into the water). Cover and steep for a minimum of 30 minutes. Strain.

Measure 4 1/2 c of the infusion into 4-6 quart pan. Add pectin. Bring to a rolling boil stirring constantly. Add sugar and stir constantly. Cook and stir until mixture comes to a rolling boil. Boil one minute longer, then remove from heat. Add lemon juice.

Skim. Pour into jars leaving 1/4" head space. Process in hot water bath for 5 minutes. Makes about 6 jars.



## **Vegetables in Tomato and Wild Carrot Seed Sauce**

ingredients:

5 medium tomatoes – chopped

2 c of zucchini, sliced thinly

1 c of onion- diced

1/4 c of broad beans

2 cloves of garlic

pinch of dried chilli

2 t of whole wild carrot seed

1 t of ground wild carrot seed (grind with mortar & pestle)

salt to taste

1 T canola oil

preparation:

Remove the broad beans from pods and steam for about 5 minutes, until the skins start to crack. Cool the beans by running in some cold water and remove the skins. Put the oil in a sauce pan and add the whole wild carrot seeds, cook them on a medium heat for a few minutes. Add the onion and sauté until softened. Crush the garlic and cook for a minute then add the zucchini slices, cook for five to seven minutes, until a bit tender. Add the chopped tomato, add the chilli, tea spoon of crushed wild carrot seeds and a pinch of salt. Add some water, about 1/3 of a cup. Cook for about 15 minutes until the tomatoes have reduced and made a nice sauce. Serve with some boiled brown basmati rice.

# Wild Parsnip

(*Pastinaca sativa*)



flower

**Where to find it:**

Found along roadsides, in waste places, and in disturbed open areas.

**Identification:**

Large compound leaves with saw tooth edges that look like celery leaves. The stem is hollow and grooved & from 2-5 feet tall. Flowers are yellow, 5 petaled & grow in small branched umbrella-like clusters. The root when cut smells earthy & nicely aromatic, just like store bought parsnip.

**When to collect:**

Late summer, fall, and early spring just before new growth. It is generally believed to get sweeter if harvested late in the fall and in very early spring.

**Which parts are edible:**

Roots (same exact species as parsnip found at the grocery).

**How to safely discard unused parts:**

Burn or bag and discard unused parts. Be careful not to disperse seeds because they remain viable for years.

**WARNING:** Sap from stems and leaves can cause skin irritation and burns. Wear gloves and long sleeves when harvesting green plants.

## **Butter Fried Wild Parsnips**

ingredients:

6-12 parsnips peeled and split lengthwise or quartered

1/4 c all purpose flour for coating

1/2 t season salt

1/2 c butter, melted

preparation:

In a large saucepan cover parsnips with water, cover and boil over medium-high heat until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain.

In a plastic bag combine flour and seasoning salt. Dip parsnips in butter and place them in the bag. Shake bag to coat parsnips with the seasoned flour.

Heat the butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. When the butter starts to sizzle, add parsnips.

Cook, turning occasionally, until all sides are golden brown

*from allrecipes.com*

## Spiced Wild Parsnip Soup

ingredients:

2 T butter

1 medium onion

1 lb parsnips, peeled and cubed

1 clove garlic, finely chopped

2 t curry powder

1 cube chicken bouillon

3-1/4 c boiling water

1/2 c heavy cream

salt & pepper to taste

pinch red pepper flakes or cayenne pepper

preparation:

Melt the butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Fry the onion in butter until soft, about 5 minutes. Add the parsnips, garlic and curry powder, and fry for a couple of minutes to release the flavors. Mix the bouillon cube into the boiling water, and pour into the saucepan. Stir to remove any bits of vegetable from the bottom of the pot. Simmer for 15 minutes or until parsnips are soft and easy to break with a wooden spoon.

Remove from the heat, and blend with a hand mixer or immersion blender. Stir in the cream, and heat through. Do not boil. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and garnish with red pepper flakes or paprika.

*From allrecipes.com*

This Field Guide/Cookbook was created by Brian D Collier for the Burlington City Arts exhibition *Of Land and Local*. The exhibition is done in affiliation with The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets.

*Eat Local Invasives* is a program of *The Society for a Re-Natural Environment*, BD Collier, Founder and President. website: ***societyrne.net***

For more information, please visit the project website: ***eatlocalinvasives.societyrne.net***

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*For those interested in other potentially edible invasives in this region, here is a partial list for you to investigate further:*

Plants: Common reed, Hardy kiwi, Wild chervil

Aquatic Plants: Watercress, Water chestnut

Aquatic Animals: Alewife, Common carp, Gizzard shad, White perch, European rudd, Rusty crayfish

Birds: European Starling

Mammals: Wild Boar

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**Warning:** Foraging and eating wild plants is a potentially dangerous activity. *The SRNE* & BD Collier have provided good faith information on how to get started, but we take no responsibility for personal harm caused by careless or irresponsible collection, preparation and consumption of any wild plants.



for more information visit  
[eatlocalinvasives.societyrne.net](http://eatlocalinvasives.societyrne.net)  
All work by Brian D Collier