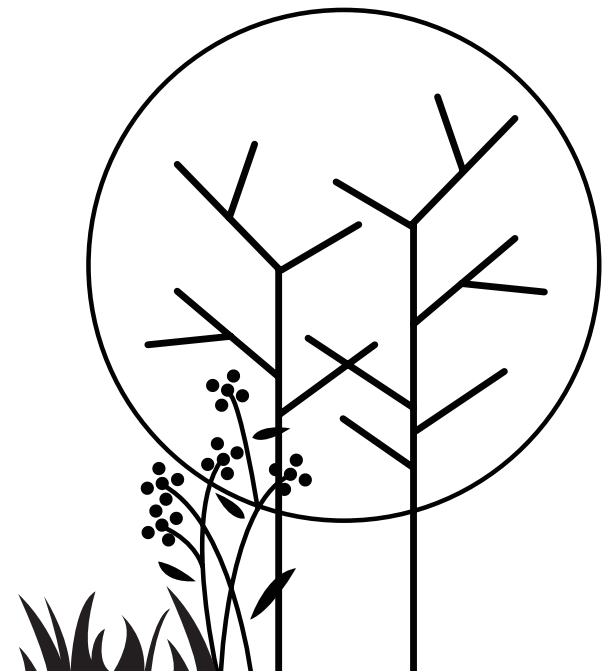


park as pharmacy  
*medicinal botany in cities*



# introduction

Hello!

Thanks for picking up the Park as Pharmacy field guide. This is the first step in preparing for staying alive in our future city, whether it involves a zombie apocalypse or the collapse of the natural world or a bit of both. Your survival will depend on your ability to make the most of what you have in the environment. Fortunately, what you have available is plenty even in the current urban conditions.

There are many, many species of wild urban plants commonly observed in New York City. This book will help you identify 22 of the most common and most useful plant species in your struggle to survive. The focus is on their usage as medicine, though there is much overlap in their value as nutritious food.



The biological resilience of these species in the urban ecosystem is due to the similarity between the city's built environment and their native habitats of rock outcrops and grasslands, as well as their production of secondary plant compounds that effectively defend against herbivores and help in competing against other plants. These secondary plant compounds are frequently the same chemicals that make them so useful as medicine. Non-native species, many brought here from overseas for medicinal, food, and ornamental uses, tend to be especially effective and resilient because they did not co-evolve naturally over long periods of time with native plants.

Keep in mind, the purpose of this guide is not to prescribe any treatments or diets, but to draw awareness to the overlooked properties of wild urban plants.

# index

*by usage*

## **nutrition**

black raspberry	13
burdock	7
common blue violet	3
common chickweed	2
dandelion	9
evening primrose	8
japanese knotweed	11
lamb's quarters	18
mock strawberry	10
purslane	20
queen anne's lace	16
pokeweed	14
woodsorrel	6

## **wounds & infections**

clovers	6
common chickweed	2
common blue violet	3
ground ivy	4
plantains	5
prostrate knotweed	17
purslane	20
st. john's wort	15
woodsorrel	6

## **pain & inflammation**

common chickweed	2
mock strawberry	10
plantains	5
prostrate knotweed	17
purslane	20

## **menstrual**

lady's thumb	12
mugwort	1

## **immunity**

burdock	7
dandelion	9
evening primrose	8
pokeweed	14

## **bronchial**

clovers	6
goldenrod	15
ground ivy	4
mock strawberry	10
mugwort	1
plantains	5

## **bladder, kidney, & liver**

black raspberry	13
dandelion	9
goldenrod	15
ground ivy	4
mugwort	1
plantains	5
queen anne's lace	16

## **digestive**

black raspberry	13
common chickweed	2
plantains	5

## **depression**

evening primrose	8
st. john's wort	15

## **revitalization**

white heath aster	21
white snakeroot	22

# index

## by common name

black raspberry	13
burdock	7
clovers	6
common blue violet	3
common chickweed	2
dandelion	9
evening primrose	8
goldenrod	15
ground ivy	4
mock strawberry	10
japanese knotweed	11
lady's thumb	12
lamb's quarters	18
mugwort	1
plantains	5
pokeweed	14
prostrate knotweed	17
purslane	20
st. johnswort	19
queen anne's lace	16
white heath aster	21
white snakeroot	22

## by scientific name

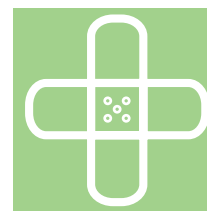
<i>Arctium sp.</i>	7
<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	1
<i>Ageratina altissima</i>	22
<i>Chenopodium album</i>	18
<i>Daucus carota</i>	16
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	4
<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	19
<i>Oenothera biennis</i>	8
<i>Phytolacca americana</i>	14
<i>Plantago sp.</i>	5
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	17
<i>Polygonum cuspidatum</i>	11
<i>Polygonum persicaria</i>	12
<i>Potentilla indica</i>	10
<i>Portulaca oleracea</i>	20
<i>Rubus occidentalis</i>	13
<i>Solidago canadensis</i>	15
<i>Stellaria media</i>	2
<i>Symphotrichum ericoides</i>	21
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	9
<i>Trifolium sp.</i>	6
<i>Viola sororia</i>	3

# table of contents

introduction	i
table of contents & symbology	ii
plant diagram & leaf classification	iii
definitions of terms	iv
list of current species,	v
map of Central Park's herbaceous coverage from late 2012,	
map of northwestern part of park with current hotspots	
scavenger hunt challenge in Central Park	vi
*species appearing in early-mid spring	1-10
*species appearing in mid-spring to autumn	11-22
chart of other urban herbs & their uses	23-24
references & studies on uses of specific plant species	25-26

\*organized by grouping species commonly observed together in Central Park

## symbology



External usage as a poultice, ointment, or oil



Internal usage as a tea, infusion, decoction, or steam



Internal consumption for nutritional, rather than medicinal, purpose



Classified as invasive species by Department of Conservation, poses a threat to biodiversity of local ecosystems



Contains sufficient quantities of potentially toxic compounds to pose danger to human health



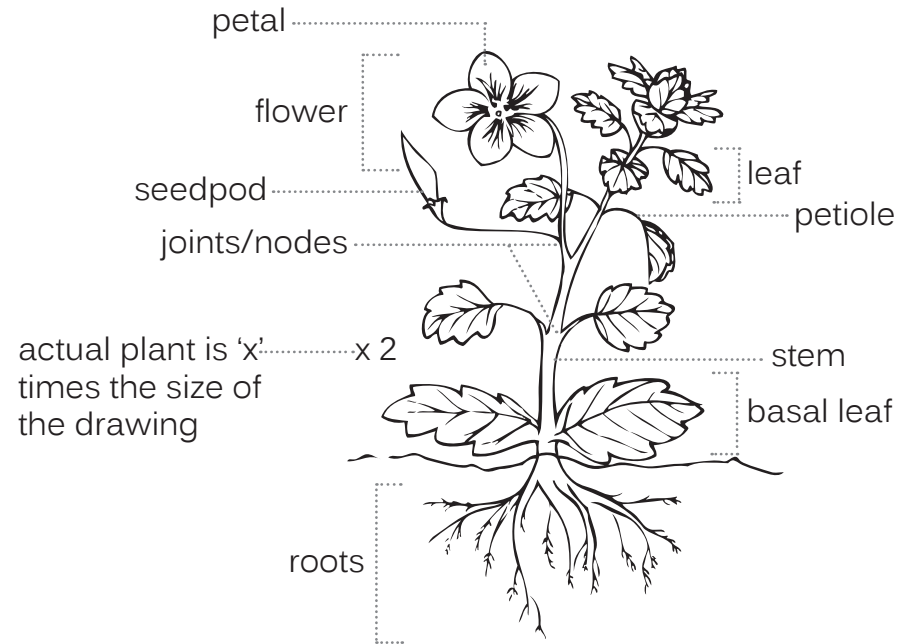
Used in traditional Chinese medicine



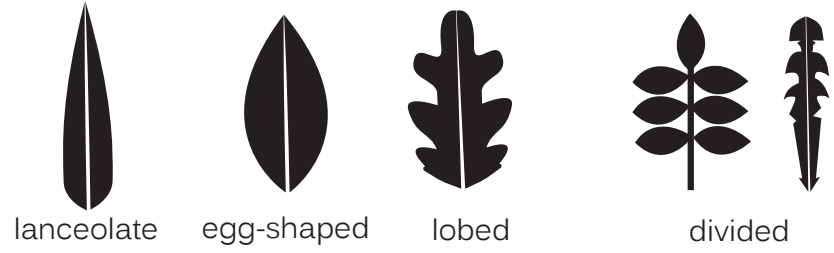
Sold as a product in stores & markets

Uses followed by an '\*' are supported by peer-reviewed research.

# identification



## leaf shapes



## margin patterns



## leaf arrangements



### Mock Strawberry

Zhao L, Zhang SL, Tao JY, Jin F, Pang R, Guo YJ, Ye P, Dong JH, Zheng GH. 2008. "Anti-inflammatory mechanism of a folk herbal medicine, *Duchesnea indica* (Andr) Focke at RAW264.7 cell line." *Immunol Invest.* 37(4):339-57.  
 BO PENG, QIN HU, XINMIN LIU,,1 LIWEI WANG, QI CHANG, JIANRONG LI, JINTIAN TANG, NING WANG, AND YUQI WANG. 2009. "Duchesnea Phenolic Fraction Inhibits In Vitro and In Vivo Growth of Cervical Cancer Through Induction of Apoptosis and Cell Cycle Arrest" *Experimental Biology and Medicine* 234:74-83.

### Mugwort

Adams, James David, Cecilia Garcia, and Garima Garg. 2012. "Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*, *Artemisia douglasiana*, *Artemisia argyi*) in the Treatment of Menopause, Premenstrual Syndrome, Dysmenorrhea and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder." *Chinese Medicine (2151-1918)* 3, no. 3: 116-123.

### Plantain

Ralph Gruppi Thome´, He´lio Batista dos Santos, Fa´bio Vieira dos Santos, Renato Jose´ da Silva Oliveira, Luis Fernando de Camargos2, Mariana Nunes Pereira, Tamara Ribeiro Longatti, Ca´ssio Martins Souto, Carlaile Soares Franco, Raissa de Oliveira Aquino Schu"ffner and Rosy Iara Maciel Azambuja Ribeiro. 2008. "Evaluation of healing wound and genotoxicity potentials from extracts hydroalcoholic of *Plantago major* and *Siparuna guianensis*." *Experimental Biology and Medicine* 2012; 237: 1379-1386.

### Prostrate Knotweed

Sohn SH, Lee EY, Lee JH, Kim Y, Shin M, Hong M, Bae H. 2009. "Screening of herbal medicines for recovery of acetaminophen-induced nephrotoxicity." *Environ Toxicol Pharmacol.* 27(2):225-30.  
 Hsu CY. 2006. "Antioxidant activity of extract from *Polygonum aviculare* L." *Biol Res.* 39(2):281-8.

### Purslane

Uddin, Md. Kamal; Juraimi, Abdul Shukor; Ali, Md. Eaqub; Ismail, Mohd Razi. 2012. "Evaluation of Antioxidant Properties and Mineral Composition of Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea* L.) at Different Growth Stages." *Int. J. Mol. Sci.* 13, no. 8: 10257-10267.

### Red Clover

Markus Lipovac, Peter Chedraui, Christine Gruenhut, Anca Gocan, Christine Kurz, Benedikt Neuber & Martin Imhof. 2012. "The effect of red clover isoflavone supplementation over vasomotor and menopausal symptoms in postmenopausal women." *Gynecological Endocrinology*, 28(3): 203-207.

### St. John's Wort

Cervo, Luigi, Marco Rozio, C. Ekalle-Soppo, Giovanna Guiso, Paolo Morazzoni, and Silvio Caccia. 2002. "Role of Hyperforin in the Antidepressant-Like Activity of *Hypericum Perforatum* Extracts." *Psychopharmacology* 164 (4): 423-8.

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Meuninck, Jim. 2008. *Medicinal Plants of North America*. Falcon Guides: Guilford, CT.

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Nuan-Wu, Jian. 2005. *An Illustrated Chinese Materia Medica*. Oxford University Press: New York.

Reader's Digest. *Magic & Medicine of Plants*. Reader's Digest Association, Inc.: Pleasantville, NY.

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USDA, NRCS. 2013. *The PLANTS Database* (<http://plants.usda.gov>, 16 March 2013). National Plant Data Team, Greensboro, NC 27401-4901 USA.

# studies

## Burdock

Ana Beatriz Albino de Almeida, Marina Sánchez-Hidalgo, Antonio Ramón Martín, Anderson Luiz-Ferreira, José Roberto Trigo, Wagner Vilegas, Lourdes Campaner dos Santos, Alba Regina Monteiro Souza-Brito, Catalina Alarcón de la Lastra. 2013. "Anti-inflammatory intestinal activity of *Arctium lappa* L. (Asteraceae) in TNBS colitis model." *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, Volume 146, 1: 300–310.

## Dandelion

Dirleise Colle, Leticia Priscilla Arantes, Priscila Gubert, Sonia Cristina Almeida da Luz, Margareth Linde Athayde, João Batista Teixeira Rocha, and Félix Alexandre Antunes Soares. 2012. "Antioxidant Properties of *Taraxacum officinale* Leaf Extract Are Involved in the Protective Effect Against Hepatotoxicity Induced by Acetaminophen in Mice." *JOURNAL OF MEDICINAL FOOD J Med Food* 15, 6: 549–556.

## Evening Primrose

Zaitone SA, Moustafa YM, Mosaad SM, El-Orabi NF. 2011.. "Effect of evening primrose oil and omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids on the cardiovascular risk of celecoxib in rats." *J Cardiovasc Pharmacol*. 58(1):72-9.

## Goldenrod

Frank M Frey, Ryan Meyers. 2010. "Antibacterial activity of traditional medicinal plants used by Haudenosaunee peoples of New York State." *BMC Complementary and Alternative Medicine* 2010, 10:64.

## Japanese Knotweed

Husam Ghanim, Chang Ling Sia, Sanaa Abuaysheh, Kelly Korzeniewski, Priyanka Patnaik, Anuritha Marumganti, Ajay Chaudhuri, and Paresh Dandona. 2010. "An Antiinflammatory and Reactive Oxygen Species Suppressive Effects of an Extract of *Polygonum Cuspidatum* Containing Resveratrol." *J Clin Endocrinol Metab*, 95(9):E1–E8.

# definitions

## anti-bacterial (anti-biotic)

prevents bacterial growth and bacterial infections

## anti-inflammatory

reduces the pain and inflammation associated with the body's response to damaged body tissues via injury, infection, etc.

## anti-microbial (anti-septic)

prevents microbial infections by killing micro-organisms including bacteria, viruses, fungi, & parasites

## anti-oxidant

reduces cell damage from oxidation activity of free radicals by serving as a reducing agent

## astringent

reduces discharge of blood, mucus, oils, etc. by constricting body tissues

## decoction

boiling plant material in water

## diuretic

increases excretion of water from body through production of urine

## extract

separating out desired plant compounds into concentrated dosages

## poultice

applying crushed plant material directly to skin

## purgative

increases excretion of wastes from body via stimulating organs, softening solids, and lubricating pathways

## tea (infusion)

steeping plant material in hot water

# Herbs in Central Park

Common species in March 2013

## Included in guide

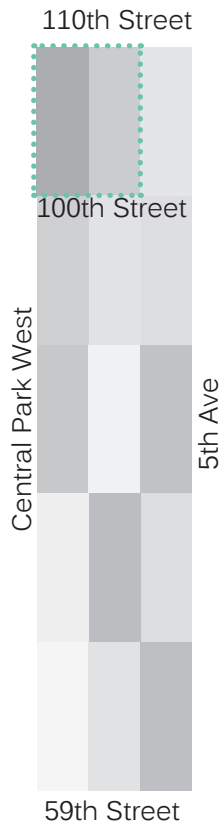
Chickweed, Clovers, Common Blue Violet, Dandelion, Evening Primrose, Mock Strawberry, Mugwort.

## Not included in guide

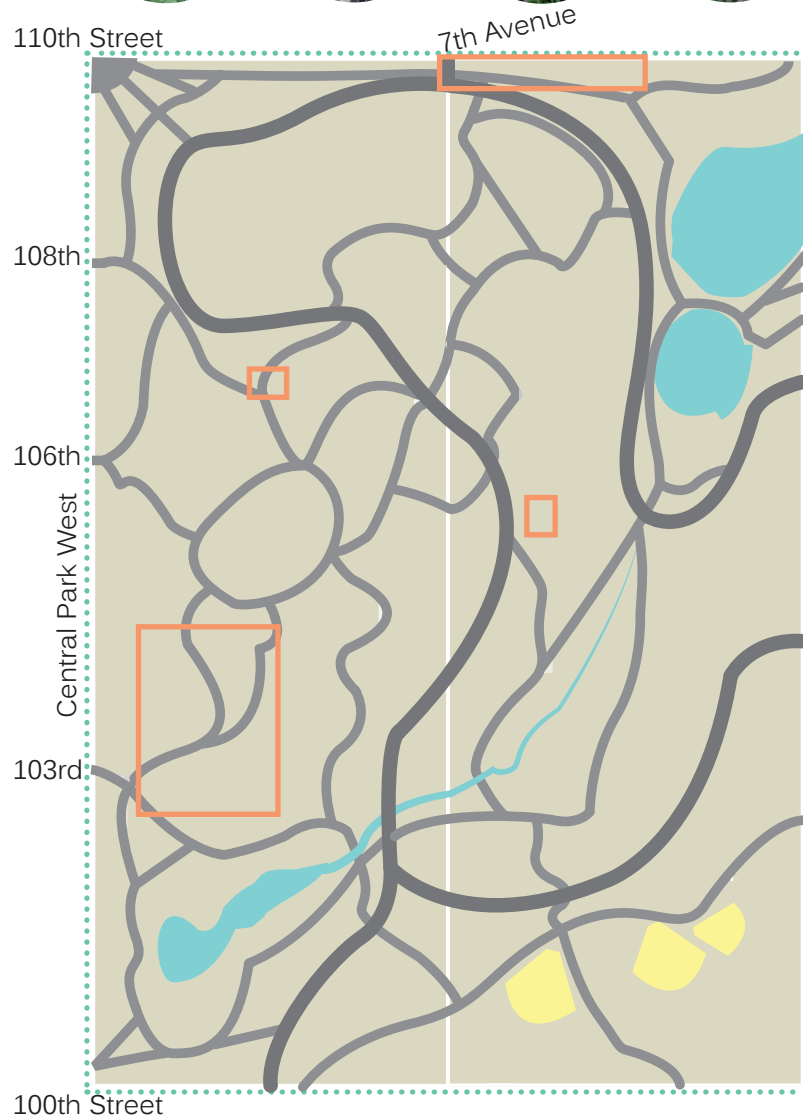
Broadleaf dock, Bull thistle, Garlic mustard, Henbit, Lesser celandine, Purple dead nettle



hotspots



shaded by percentage  
herbaceous coverage  
in October 2012



## Henbit

*Lamium amplexicaule*

## Horseweed

*Conyza canadensis*

## Indian mallow

*Abutilon theophrasti*

## Japanese honeysuckle

*Lonicera japonica*

## Lesser celandine

*Ranunculus ficaria*

## Mullein

*Verbascum thapsus*

## Multiflora rose

*Rosa multiflora*

## Pepperweeds

*Lepidium sp.*

## Porcelain berry

*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*

## Pigweeds/Amaranths

*Amaranthus sp.*

## Stinging Nettle

*Urtica dioica*

## Wineberry

*Rubus phoenicolasius*

## Woodsorrel

*Oxalis sp.*

Henbit	●	●			
Horseweed	●	●	●	●	
Indian mallow	●	●			
Japanese honeysuckle	●	●		●	●
Lesser celandine	●	●			
Mullein	●	●			
Multiflora rose		●	●		●
Pepperweeds		●	●		●
Porcelain berry	●	●	●		●
Pigweeds/Amaranths		●	●		
Stinging Nettle		●	●		
Wineberry			●		●
Woodsorrel		●	●		○

# more urban herbs



Herb Name	First Aid	Warmth	Food	Medicine	Navigation	Fire	Poison
Asiatic dayflower <i>Commelina communis</i>		●	●	●			
Bittersweet nightshade <i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	●						●
Black nightshade <i>Solanum nigrum</i>			●				●
Bull thistle <i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	●	●	●				
Broadleaf dock <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	●	●	●				
Cattail <i>Typha latifolia</i>	●	●	●	●			
Chicory <i>Cichorium intybus</i>		●					
Comfrey <i>Symphytum officinale</i>	●	●					○
Common reed <i>Phragmites australis</i>		●		●	●	●	
Curly dock <i>Rumex crispus</i>		●	●				○
English ivy <i>Hedera helix</i>	●						●
Greenbrier <i>Smilax rotundifolia</i>			●			●	
Ground mallow <i>Malva sylvestris</i>	●	●					

# stayin' alive

Can you survive for 2 days in post-apocalypse Central Park? Try to use this guide to deal with the following situations by collecting the appropriate plants! If you survive, you get to live. And maybe enjoy some new tastes!

Grrr - is that a bear or your stomach? Either way, best to find something yummy and filling!

6AM

---

Ouch - hid in a patch of poison ivy. Better patch up before the rashes and swelling become too intense.

3PM

---

Cough, cough - could be a cold or bronchitis, but best to soothe your lungs & boost immunity ASAP.

12AM

---

Almost roasted & seasoned by zombie chefs - cover up your burns to smell less delectable and prevent infection!

6AM

---

Burned out from running - power back up with some vitamins & essential fatty acids.

3PM

---

Strengthen your digestive & metabolic organs against the pains of an irregular diet and questionable water sources!

12AM

23

vi

# mugwort



*Artemisia vulgaris*

perennial  
disturbed, compacted soil with high pH

strong aroma

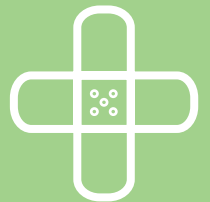
flower clusters



alternate leaves  
deeply dissected  
with sharp pointed  
lobes



tall upright stands



diuretic, anti-inflammatory\*

dried leaf burned in Chinese  
acupuncture "moxabustion"



leaf tea treats menstrual  
irregularity, colds, bronchitis,  
colic, epilepsy, fevers, and  
kidney ailments, sciatica

promotes appetite



# white snakeroot

*Ageratina altissima*

perennial  
disturbed, compacted soil with high pH

umbels of  
small white  
flowers

x 5



opposite leaves  
heart-shaped & sharply  
toothed with long stems

smooth stem

grow to 3 feet



x 1.25



steam for reviving the  
unconscious  
and cleansing baths



# white heath aster

*Symphotrichum ericoides*

perennial  
urban meadows, lots, rubble, roadsides



alternate leaves  
lanceolate with smooth  
margins on lower

small thin leaves  
on upper stem

hairy erect stems

small white  
daisy-like  
flowers



steam for reviving the  
unconscious  
and cleansing baths

# common chickweed

*Stellaria media*

winter annual  
lawns, rubble, stone walls,  
pavement cracks, roadsides, vacant lots



small white  
flowers with  
5 deeply  
notched petals

opposite leaves  
round and pointed  
about 1" long



cooling ointment for ulcers,  
rashes, insect bites, &  
inflammation



contains anti-oxidant ascorbic  
acid (form of vitamin C)

contains soothing mucilage  
contains saponins that may aid  
absorption of nutrients

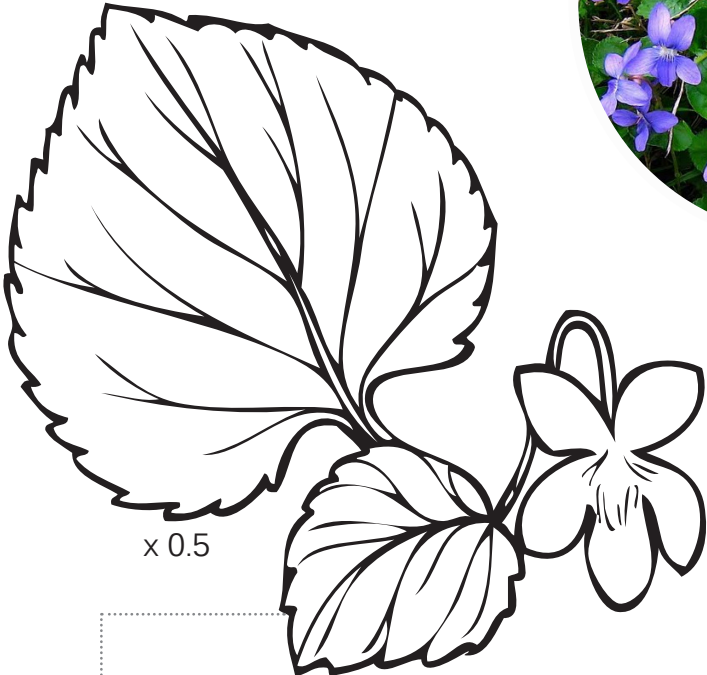


young stem & leaves (taste like  
baby spinach)

# common blue violet

*Viola sororia*

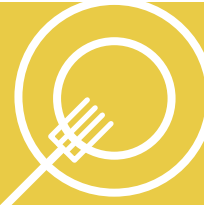
perennial  
lawns, urban meadows, roadsides



x 0.5

purple flowers with irregular petals

alternate shiny heart-shaped leaves with bluntly serrated margins



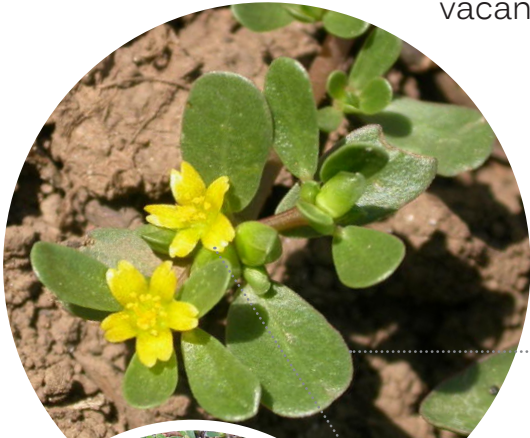
young leaves & flowers in spring, raw or candied  
mature leaves cooked



# purslane

*Portulaca oleracea*

summer annual  
vacant lots, waste areas, compacted lawns, pavement cracks



grow to 6" tall and 2 feet wide

opposite succulent leaves, paddle-shaped, glossy

bright yellow flowers  
5 petals open when sunny



prostrate red or green stems



anti-inflammatory  
rich source of omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins, minerals & antioxidants\*



tart leaves and stems  
mucilage used for thickening soups & stews

# st. johnswort



*Hypericum perforatum*

perennial  
vacant lots, minimally maintained lawns and public parks, meadows, stone walls, waste areas.

grow to 3-4 feet tall

opposite leaves, elliptical to oblong  
1-1.5" long by 0.25-0.5" wide  
covered with translucent dots

clusters of yellow flowers,  
five petals  
0.75 to 1" wide



flower & leaf tea for wounds



antimicrobial against influenza, herpes, retrovirus, polio, hepatitis C, gram-negative and gram-positive bacteria  
  
anti-depressant\*  
may combat fatigue, relieve anxiety, improve sleep, support weight loss, and reduce pre-menstrual/menopausal symptoms

# ground ivy

*Glechoma hederacea*

perennial  
minimally maintained lawns, parks, and grasslands, roadsides, lots



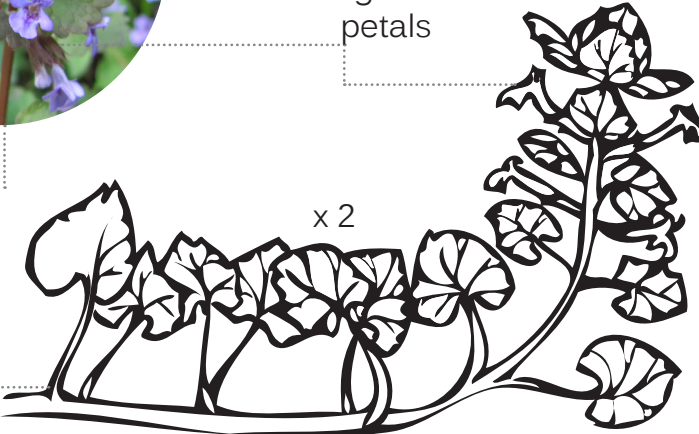
opposite leaves  
kidney-shaped  
with broadly rounded teeth



purple flowers  
with irregular petals

prostrate,  
square stems

roots at nodes



leaf tea for respiratory ailments, asthma, bronchitis, and sore throats  
  
source of vitamin C

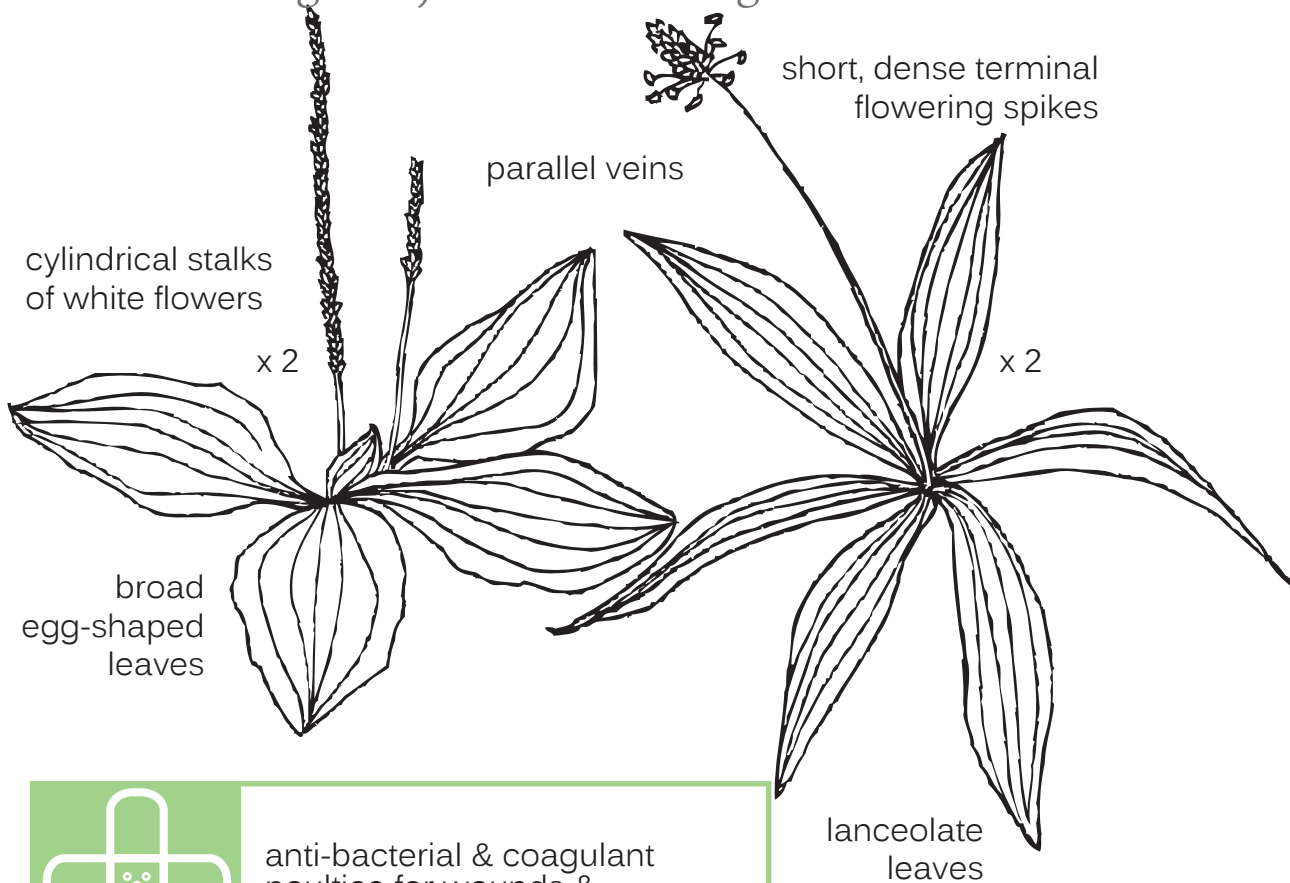
# plantains



semi-evergreen perennial  
lawns, urban meadows, roadsides

*Plantago major*

*Plantago lanceolata*



broad egg-shaped leaves

short, dense terminal flowering spikes

parallel veins

lanceolate leaves



anti-bacterial & coagulant  
poultice for wounds &  
inflammations\*



leaf & seed tea for coughs,  
bronchitis, diarrhea, dysentery,  
urinary tract bleeding

contains soothing mucilage

# lamb's quarters

*Chenopodium album*

summer annual

lawns, urban meadows, roadsides, public parks, waste areas

alternate leaves

dull green

roughly triangular or  
rhomboidal with  
irregular teeth

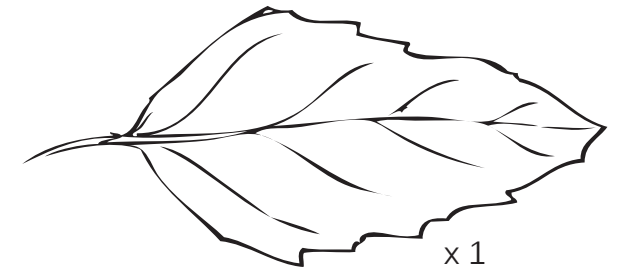
mealy undersides

2 to 4" long

large inflorescences at  
ends of branches with  
tiny fruits



**note:** make sure to  
differentiate between  
*C. album* and its close  
relative, *C. ambrosiodes*,  
which is potentially toxic,  
though commonly used  
as a Mexican spice  
known as epazote.  
Epazote leaves are more  
lobed.



young leaves & stem  
contains vitamins, minerals,  
protein folic acid  
relative of spinach & quinoa

# prostrate knotweed

*Polygonum aviculare*

summer annual  
lawns, urban meadows, roadsides

upright in  
good soil

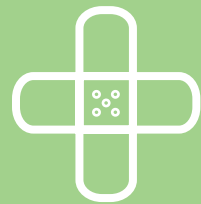


alternate grey-green leaves  
lance-shaped  
0.5 to 1.25" long

mat-forming,  
prostrate in  
stressful conditions



tiny white flowers  
with 5 petal



poultice for wounds, nose  
bleeds, itching



tea for inflammation, kidney\* &  
urinary disease

anti-oxidant\* & anti-cancer\*

# clovers

perennial  
lawns, parks, grasslands, roadsides, lots

*Trifolium repens*



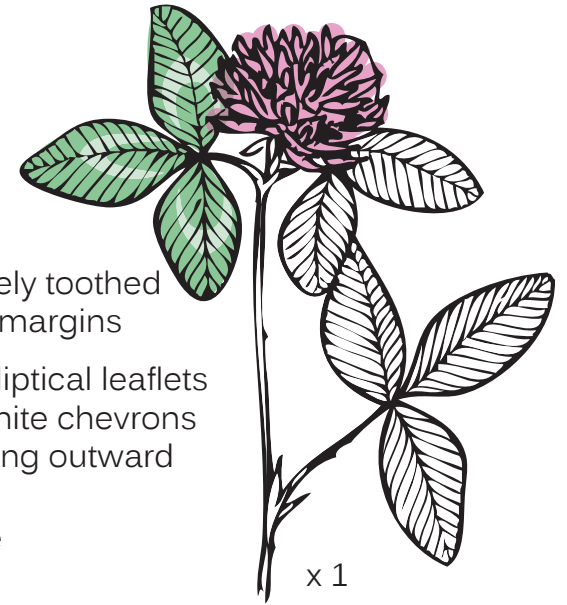
finely toothed  
margins

three elliptical leaflets  
with white chevrons  
pointing outward



round white  
flowerhead  
1" diameter

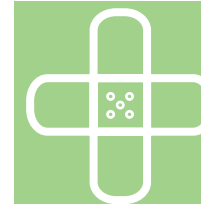
*Trifolium pratense*



hairy, semi-erect stem



**note:** this is not  
a clover! this  
is wood sorrel,  
which is also  
useful & yummy!



poultice for burns & ulcers



cough suppressant  
mild sedative

extract for reducing menopausal  
symptoms\*

# burdock



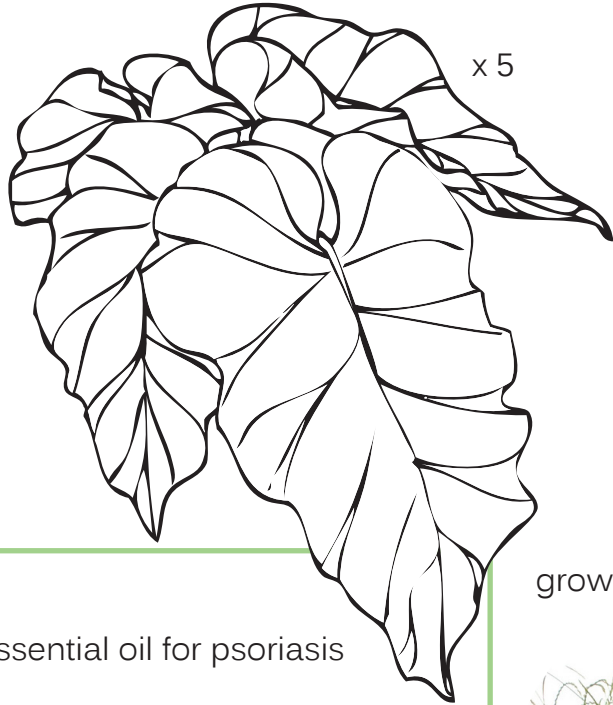
*Arctium lappa, minus*

biennial  
lawns, urban meadows, roadsides

egg-shaped  
upper leaves

broad, heart-  
shaped lower  
leaves

elephant ear-  
shaped basal  
leaves

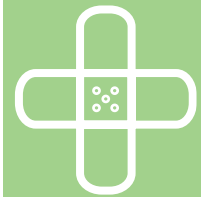


x 5



purple  
flowers  
& prickly,  
clinging  
fruits

grows to 7 to 8 feet



essential oil for psoriasis



anti-inflammatory\*

tea for arthritis, sore  
throat, congestion, &  
immune system boost



first year root known  
as gobo in Japanese cuisine

young leaves

# queen anne's lace

*Daucus carota*

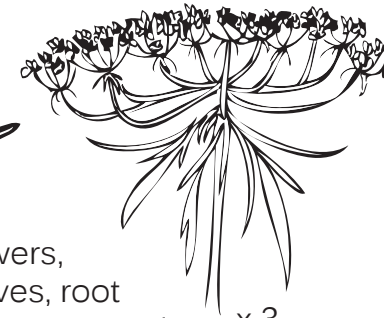
biennial  
roadsides, vacant lots, meadows

alternate  
finely divided,  
feather-like  
leaves

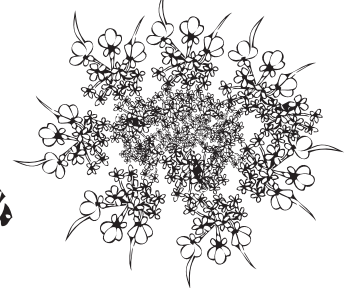


x 2

flowers,  
leaves, root  
carrot-scented

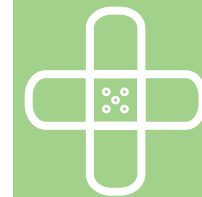


x 3



tiny white flowers in  
compound umbels

grow to 5 feet tall



seed oil in skin products as anti-  
wrinkle agent



diuretic  
plant & seed tea for urinary  
problems



root with dense carrot flavor best  
suited for cake & soup

root carotenoids support eyes



root

# goldenrod

*Solidago canadensis*

perennial

fields, edges, roadsides, urban meadows, vacant lots

grow to 5 feet  
in height

alternate  
sharp-toothed leaves,  
narrow & lanceolate

x 1



golden yellow  
flowers in clusters



x 0.25



relaxant & anti-inflammatory  
leaf & flower tea for acute  
infections (colds, flus, bronchitis)

kidney and bladder stones, urinary  
tract infections

anti-microbial\* & anti-oxidant

# evening primrose

*Oenothera biennis*

biennial

dry, sandy, gravelly soil, urban parks



basal rosette of lance-  
shaped leaves  
with coarse margins and  
white central veins  
4" to 8" long



bright yellow flowers  
that open at night  
0.75" to 2" diameter



seed oil extract for essential  
fatty acid deficiency, high  
cholesterol, premenstrual  
symptoms, mild depression

thins blood platelets\*



young leaves

first year roots in fall  
or early spring

# dandelion

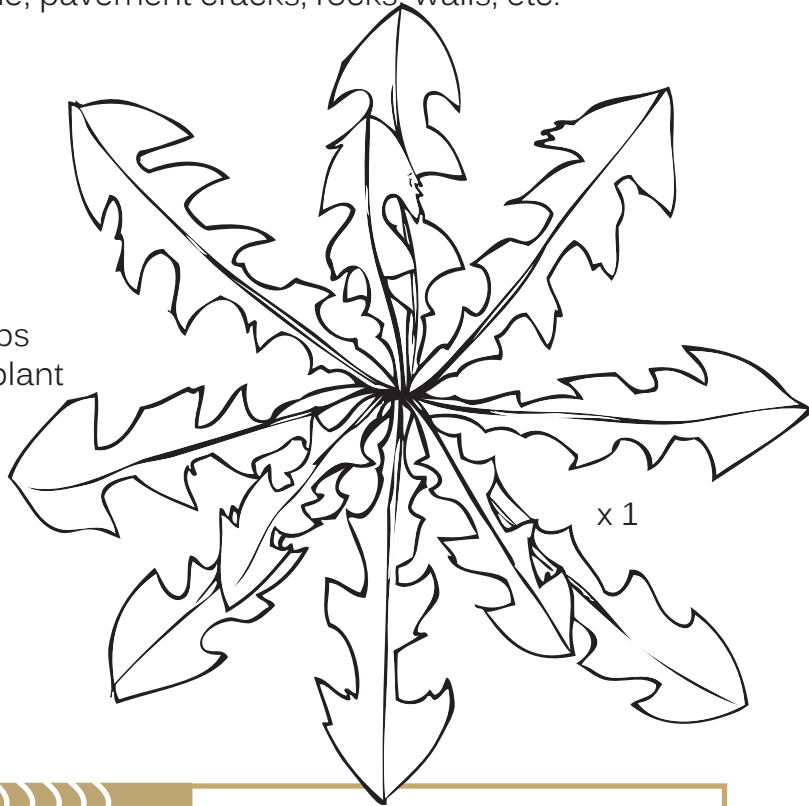


*Taraxacum officinale*

perennial  
lawns, vacant lots, rubble, pavement cracks, rocks, walls, etc.

low-growing

basal rosette of divided leaves 3 to 10" long  
toothed margins with tips point toward center of plant



bright yellow composite flowers that turn into puffball seed heads



	fresh root tea as powerful diuretic, digestive/appetite stimulant treats liver, bladder, kidney ailments*
	good source of vitamins A & C leaves for salad roasted root as coffee substitute



Warnings:  
Avoid grown plants with purple stems as toxicity increases with maturity.

# pokeweed

*Phytolacca americana*

perennial  
fields, gardens, roadsides, waste areas



bright purple stems

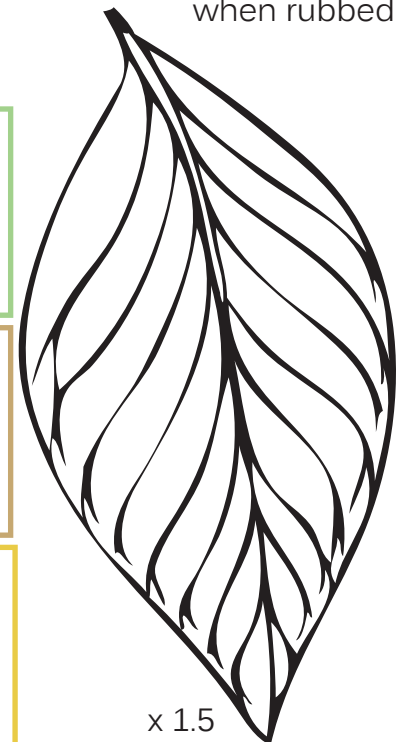
drooping clusters of purple-black berries



grows to 10 feet, but often 5 feet

alternate leaves entire and ovate with musty smell when rubbed

	root poultice for swelling, arthritis, eczema
	purgative tea root extract for immunity
	young shoots in spring berries for food coloring





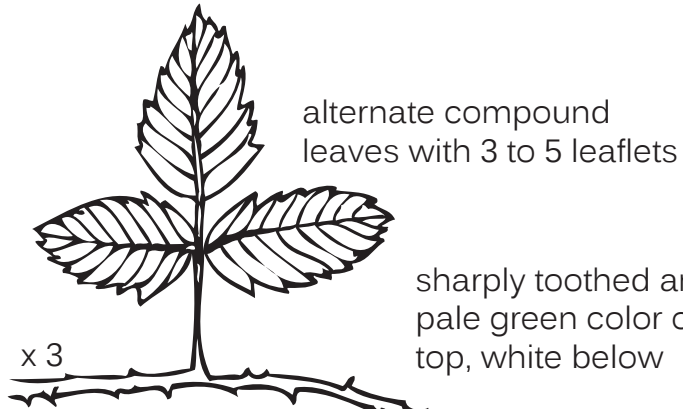
# black raspberry

*Rubus occidentalis*

deciduous shrub  
lawns, urban meadows, roadsides



grow to 4-6 feet



root tea for diarrhea, stomach pains

delicious berries



# mock strawberry

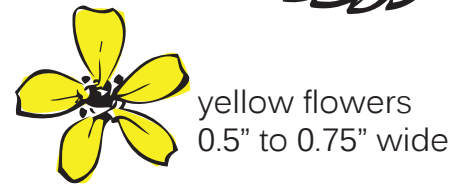
*Potentilla indica*

perennial  
lawns, vacant lots, roadsides



low-growing

alternate divided leaves with 3 leaflets regularly toothed



plant tea or decoction for sore throats, irregular uterine discharge or bleeding

anti-oxidant & anti-inflammatory\*

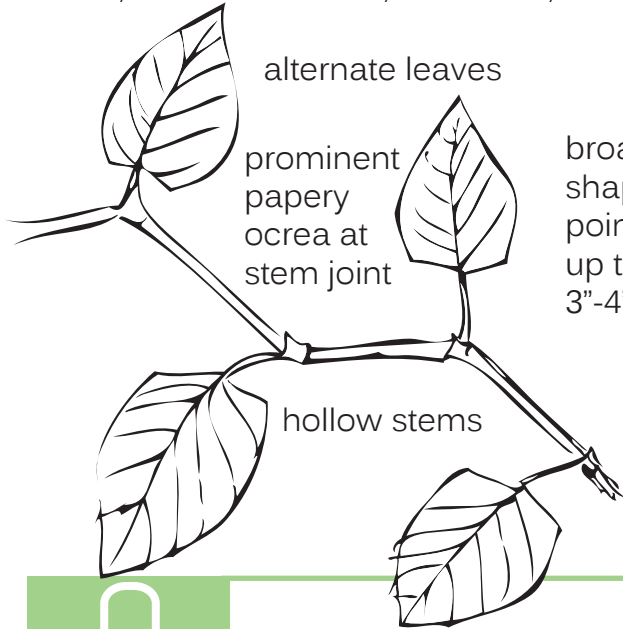
tasteless berries

# jap. knotweed



*Polygonum cuspidatum*

perennial  
lawns, urban meadows, roadsides, vacant lots



alternate leaves

prominent  
papery  
ocrea at  
stem joint

hollow stems

broadly egg-  
shaped with  
pointed tip  
up to 6" long by  
3"-4" wide



x 2

clusters of green-white  
lantern-like seedpods



x 2

conspicuous clusters  
of white flowers  
4" to 5" long



poultice for sores, burns,  
carbuncles



root tea for treating menstrual &  
post-partum problems, jaundice,  
cough

strong anti-oxidant & anti-  
inflammatory\*



edible young shoots in spring  
similar to asparagus

# lady's thumb

*Polygonum persicaria*

summer annual  
moist soil in sun or shade  
parks, vacant lots, riparian zones



grow in patches  
up to 2 feet tall

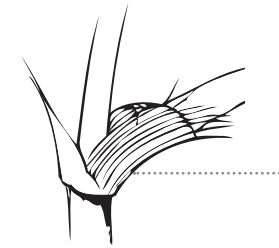
alternate leaves

smooth stems with  
fringed joints

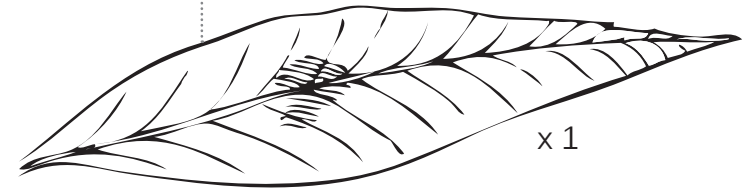


x 3

leaves lanceolate to elliptical  
with dark "thumbprint" on  
center of each leaf



densely  
branched with  
terminal clusters  
of tiny pink  
flowers



x 1



leaf tea astringent for menstrual  
& internal bleeding problems