



## Wood Sorrel (genus Oxalis)

Have you seen this charming little plant growing in your yard?

It's not a weed, as some people think. It's one of summer's adorable and **edible** herbal gifts, rich in Vitamins A & C, flavonoids, and polyphenols. It also has antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antibacterial properties. It's called Wood Sorrel in the genus Oxalis and had many traditional medicinal uses throughout history.

Long ago, this easy-to-grow and beneficial little plant was taken aboard, cared for, and munched on during long sea voyages. Travelers and sailors alike depended on it to prevent scurvy when the lemon and lime stores were exhausted.

### Plant Description

Wood Sorrel is from the genus *Oxalis*, which means *sour*. Hence its common name, Sour Grass. The yellow flower variety, *Oxalis stricta*, grows wild in our yard, and we call it the pickle plant! In areas with four seasons, you'll find it growing in spring and summer or early autumn. If you look online, you'll discover many beautiful, cultivated varieties with colorful leaves and blossoms; one even has gorgeous purple leaves, which you can find [HERE](#).

Small and compact, it grows in clumps and resembles the unrelated clover plant. Generally, it reaches a height of about 9 inches and has lovely light green leaves that are about an inch wide. Each one has three heart-shaped leaflets that are creased along the center vein, just like a paper heart folded in half. ♥ Adorably, they fold closed at night and open again each morning.

It blooms with dainty five-petaled, star-shaped blossoms in yellow, white, pink, or violet, depending on the variety.

Wood sorrel bears, ¾-inch-long seed pods that stand upright. To us, they resemble tiny little okra pods with a pickle taste. When mature, the pods burst open and shoot the seeds several feet into the surrounding area to propagate. The first time I experienced those tiny shooting seeds, I was very surprised at how far they actually traveled.



### Culinary Suggestions

To some people, this plant tastes lemony, and to others, it has a bit of a pickle juice or vinegar taste that pairs nicely with fresh salads, sandwiches, and grilled meats.



**Sandwich Suggestion:** A little Yellow Wood Sorrel leaves, blossoms, and seed pods provide a bit of tang and added vitamins to a summer sandwich with protein of your choice, shredded carrot, sliced cherry tomatoes, cut-and-come-again lettuce, alfalfa sprouts, sliced hard-cooked egg, and half of a mashed avocado spread on caraway seeded rye, whole grain, or gluten-free bread.

**Use it as a pretty garnish** on top of cooked steaks, pork chops, fish fillets, or chicken.

### How Much to Use

1/4 to a 1/3 cup of aerial parts (loosely packed) per person. Wood Sorrel should NOT be used to replace all leafy greens, instead, use it as an occasional accompaniment to lettuce on sandwiches, in salads, or as a meat garnish.

All varieties of Wood Sorrel contain oxalic acid, which is responsible for its tart taste. You'll find it in other leafy salad favorites like large-leaf sorrel and spinach. It's in broccoli, one of my favorite brassicas, and in beets, rhubarb, coffee beans, and chocolate. It's safe for most people when eaten in small amounts with other foods. **For more health information, see the last page of this tip sheet.**

### Summer Sorrel Salad

Serves 2

From my back garden, I gathered fresh wood sorrel leaves, blossoms, and tender seed pods and picked enough fresh lettuce for two salads.

I used lettuces, including Romaine, Large Leaf Garden Sorrel, Red Oak Leaf, Butter Lettuce, and a mix of cut-and-come-again leaves. All were rinsed and dried.

I reserved a small amount of Wood Sorrel to top the salad and lightly chopped the remaining leaves and flowers that loosely filled a 1/2 cup measure.



The chopped seed pods measured 1 mounded tablespoon.

In a large salad bowl, I tossed together the chopped salad greens and wood sorrel with 1 shredded carrot. To that, I added 1/3 cup diced and drained pickled beets, 1/4 cup of sliced olives, 1/2 cup chopped ham, and 1/4 cup each of both shredded Asiago and mild Cheddar cheese.

The salad was topped with 2 grated hard-cooked eggs and the reserved whole wood sorrel leaves and blossoms. The salad was dressed with Balsamic Vinegar, Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Celtic Salt, and fresh ground Black Peppercorns.

**Substitutions:** Try roast turkey or chicken in place of the ham. Change out the vegetables for others of your choice, such as cherry tomatoes, diced avocado,



celery, or cucumbers. You can skip the vegetables altogether and replace them with seasonal fruits like strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, grapes, or mango.

### Plant Habitat

Wood Sorrel is commonly found growing in yards, gardens, along sidewalks, roads, or in parks or nature areas. It prefers loose, evenly moist soil but will adapt and grow in most soil types, provided there is good drainage.

This herb plant prefers partial or dappled shade, especially during the hot noonday sun, but it will tolerate growing in full sun or shady areas.

### Harvesting

Using kitchen scissors, prudently cut fresh, **tender young leaves, flowers, and seed pods**, but leave enough to ensure the plant will continue to grow and thrive.

### Foraging

Foraging is a great way to collect free, wild foods that are fresh and nutrient-dense.

Finding Wood Sorrel is easy because it often grows right in our backyards or close by. If you are new to foraging or are interested in gathering some of the plentiful wild foods a bit farther from home, you might like to read my blog post, [10 Quick Guidelines When Foraging for Wild Foods](#).

### Safety & Health Bit

For those who are pregnant, nursing, or have pre-existing health issues, it's best to consult with your healthcare practitioner about anything new you would like to eat.

Oxalic acid, when eaten in high quantities, can cause nutrient absorption problems, particularly with calcium. I think very few people would overeat Wood Sorrel, but I think you'll agree that many people easily overeat rhubarb pie or chocolate.

Allergies can be a possibility when consuming new foods. It's a good idea to try things in very small amounts before eating a full-size serving.

*The information contained in this herbal tip sheet is for educational purposes and is not intended to diagnose or treat health conditions or illnesses.*