

There are many foods in the wilderness that require no care in growing; finding them is the tricky part. Wintercress, *Barbarea vulgaris*, is one food that grows even during the winter months. This little plant provides great nutrition for our bodies in winter through early spring. Common Wintercress is high in vitamin a and vitamin c. Because of its high amounts of vitamin c it was used medicinally to help prevent scurvy in the past. It's



easy to find and abundant here in Athens Ohio.

Wintercress grows in moist soil so generally it can be found in moist forests, meadows, and along stream banks. As with any wild foods try to avoid picking plants close to roads because they may have been exposed to gas fumes, or run off from the road. This plant grows between 1 and 2 feet. Its leaves are similar to that of a dandelion. It has 2 types of leaves, base leaves and stem leaves. The stem leaves look a little more rounded the base leaves which are elongated. The bundles of little bright yellow flowers atop the stem are a sign that the leaves are getting bitterer.

Many people will only eat the leaves until the plant starts to bud because of the bitterness. Part of the mustard family,

Wintercress has a tangy, peppery taste when it's young and gets more bitter the older the plant gets. For a less pungent taste, boil it a few times in fresh water to lighten the flavor. The flower buds themselves may be boiled and eaten as well. There are some delicious recipe ideas at

<http://www.sacredearth.com/ethnobotany/foraging/Wintercress.php> for Wintercress. I hope you enjoy and happy hunting!

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