

Charles Francis Saunders (1859-1941) was a naturalist, writer, and photographer who published books on California and the Southwest. This book presents a study of wild plants that are useful as foods, beverages, and for other purposes together with Indian lore regarding them. The author writes: ALL the familiar vegetables and fruits of our kitchen gardens, as well as the cereals of our fields, were once wild plants; or, to put it more accurately, they are the descendants, improved by cultivation and selection, of ancestors as untamed in their way as the primitive men and women who first learned the secret of their nutritiousness. Many of these are, for example, the potato, Indian corn, certain sorts of beans and squashes, and the tomato are of New World origin; and the purpose of this volume is to call attention to certain other useful plants, particularly those available as a source of human meat and drink, that are to-day growing wild in the woods, waters and open country of the United States. Though now largely neglected, many of these plants formed in past years an important element in the diet of the aborigines, who were vegetarians to a greater extent than is generally suspected, and whose patient investigation and ingenuity have opened the way to most that we know of the economic possibilities of our indigenous flora. White explorers, hunters and settlers have also, at times, made use of many of these plants to advantage, though with the settlement of the country a return to the more familiar fruits and products of civilization has naturally followed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS I Wild Plants With Edible Tubers, Bulbs Or Roots II Wild Plants With Edible Tubers, Bulbs Or Roots III Wild Seeds of Food Value, And How They Have Been Utilized IV The Acorn As Human Food And Some Other Wild Nuts V Some Little Regarded Wild Fruits And Berries VI Wild Plants With Edible Stems And Leaves VII Beverage Plants Of Field And Wood VIII Vegetable Substitutes For Soap IX Some Medicinal Wildings Worth Knowing X Miscellaneous Uses Of Wild Plants XI A Cautionary Chapter On Certain Poisonous Plants

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