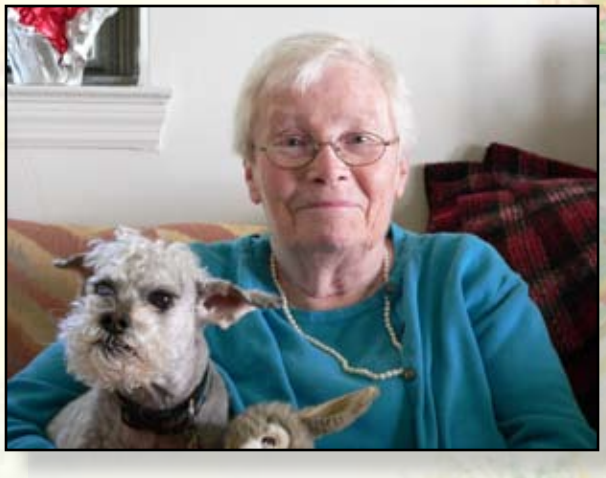


Linda Runyon

Wild Food Author and Teacher

Basic Info

Linda Runyon teaches people to identify, find, harvest, prepare, store & use wild edible food through her books, cards & DVD.

As a child, Linda Runyon spent 3 months each year at her parents' camp in Indian Lake, NY. This was a far cry from her home in Watchung, NJ. Later, the Adirondacks of upstate NY was to become the background of her own wilderness experiences, homesteading on the outskirts of Indian Lake.

For 13 years, she lived with her son and husband without indoor plumbing, electricity or running water. This way of life blessed Linda with knowledge and skills to live from the land. She continues to this day to enrich her life with these skills, even during her residence in a comfortable retirement community.

Linda is a mother of three, a Grandmother of four, a retired registered nurse, an author, lecturer, and an artist.

Career Appearances

Linda has appeared in print, television and radio over her long career. Some high points include:

- *The Home Show*
- Lifetime cable TV
- *To Tell the Truth*
- *People* Magazine
- "The Herbal Medicine Chest" with Earl Mindell.



Linda's Career Timeline

Some highlights include:

1972 Linda went to the woods of upstate NY. Linda later supplemented her family's income with the sale of books of her husband's poetry. These saddle stitched books, named *A Glimpse of Peace* and *Flickering Free*, illustrated with Linda's fine line and charcoal drawings, can still be found around the world today!

1985 Linda, having emerged from the woods, started her career of teaching wild food to Adirondack tourists using a wild food walk she created on borrowed land and an early photocopied version of *A Survival Acre*. This book alone has sold tens of thousands of copies, and has been in continuous print since the first copies to this day.

1986 Linda founded the Runyon Institute in Warrensburg, NY, which became a center of wild food teachings and activities, and featured a large, elaborate wild food walk.

1988 - '89 Linda lived in North River and Lake George, NY. These were the "publicity years" as Linda worked with Random House toward releasing a major field guide. While this was ultimately not to be published with Harmony, the development eventually went into the 2002 release of *From Crabgrass Muffins to Pine Needle Tea*.

1987 - 1999 Linda taught in Phoenix, Arizona, where she developed a long teaching relationship with Willie Whitefeather. Linda also worked in these years as an R.N. and was later the head nurse of a large geriatric facility.

1995 While in Arizona, Linda oversaw the creation of a large wild food identification walk on the grounds of the Gledale Public Library, Phoenix, Arizona, where thousands of people per week toured it.

1999 Linda came East again. She built a log cabin in Bridgeton, NJ. During this time she taught children at the Children of the Earth Foundation in Greenwich, NJ. She built a walk on their grounds, and another later in Fordsville, NJ.

2008 Linda unofficially "retired" into a retirement community in South Jersey, but as she did, her business exploded. She's no longer burdened by administrative duties in the business, but continues doing consultation and radio programs, and of course, eating wild food!

The Plants

Linda focuses on a limited number of plants which grow nearly everywhere. A few plants are specific to deserts. The list includes:

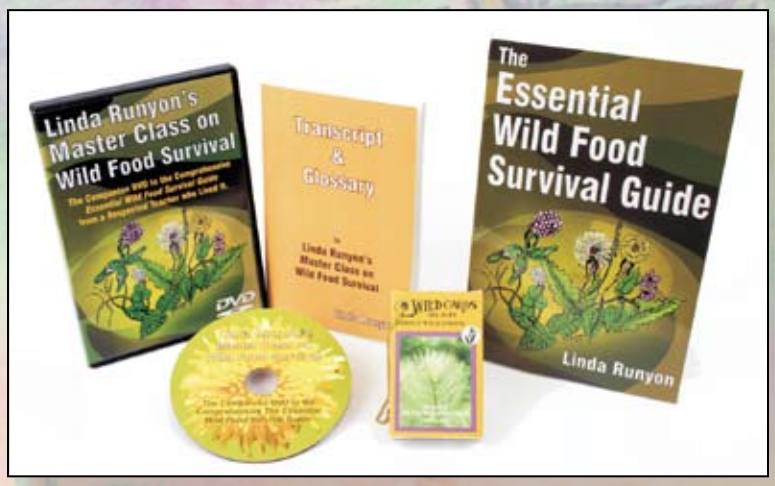
Aloe Vera*
Amaranth (in SA as Pigweed)
Arrowhead (in SA as Wapatoo)
Aster (in SA as Blue Aster)
Balsam
Birch (in SA as White Birch)
Blackberry
Blueberry
Bracken (only in SA)
Bulrush
Bur-reed (only in SA)
Bull Thistle (only in DVD)
Burdock
Catnip (only in SA)
Cattail
Chamomile
Chickweed
Chicory (only in FG & SA)
Cholla
Crabgrass
Daisy
Dandelion
Dock (Curly Dock in SA & DVD)
Evening Primrose (in DVD as Primrose)
Day Lily (only in DVD)
False Solomon's Seal (only in SA)
Fiddleheads (only in SA)
Filarie
Fireweed (not in SA)
Goldenrod
Grape
Heal-All (only in SA)
Lamb's Quarters
Malva
Maple
Meadowsweet
Milk Thistle
Milkweed
Mint
Mullein
Mustard
Nettles
Nopales* (only in DVD)
Peppermint (only in SA)
Phragmites
Pine
Plantain
Prickly Pear*
Primrose
Purslane
Queen Anne's Lace
Raspberry
Red Clover
Rose Hip
Saguaro*
Sheep Sorrel (in SA as Field Sorrel)
Shepherd's Purse
Sow Thistle
Strawberry
Sumac
Sunflower
Tansy (only in SA)
Thistle
Thyme
Tumbleweed*
Violet
White Clover
Wild Lettuce, (in DVD as Blue Lettuce)
Wild Rice (only in SA)
Willow
Wintergreen
Wood Sorrel
Yarrow

*grows only in the desert
"SA" is *A Survival Acre*
"DVD" is *Linda Runyon's Master Class on Wild Food Survival DVD*

The Books & Materials

Linda's books & other materials listed in the order of publishing:
Click to go to synopsis within this document.

- ***A Survival Acre*** 1985
- ***Wild Cards*** ® 1987
- ***A Basic Middle Eastern Desert Survival Guide*** 1993
- ***From Crabgrass Muffins to Pine Needle Tea*** 2002
  which in a later edition became
- ***The Essential Wild Food Survival Guide*** 2007
- ***Homestead Memories*** 2008
- ***Why Not LOVE?*** 2008 Creative Commons License
  poetry by Ken Heitz, illustrated & published by Linda Runyon
- ***Linda Runyon's Master Class on Wild Food Survival DVD*** 2009
- ***Eat the Trees*** August, 2011 (coming soon!)



The three most popular products form the "Knowledge Package"

Resources

Linda's website is OfTheField.com, and it includes a store and a forum. There is much free information there.

The publicity media center is at http://ilooka.com/WFCPR/PR.html. Linda's "Rules of Foraging" can be found there, and a "Disclaimer" to protect us all as well. These should be included with any publication, as there is always a bit of risk involved with foraging, hence some exposure.

Linda's team in Boston can help you with logistics. Send email to eric@ofthe-field.com, or call 781-688-2754. If you have questions for Linda, her email address is lrunyon8@yahoo.com. She's connected these days!



The safest place to harvest weeds, Runyon maintains, is your own backyard. "It's controllable. You know if you haven't sprayed."

WEED ALL ABOUT IT! LINDA RUNYON, A WILD CHEF, SAYS WE SHOULD VEG OUT ON CRABGRASS AND CLOVER

When Linda Runyon talks about lawn food, she definitely doesn't mean fertilizer. She's talking weeds. While crabgrass, dandelions and clover are the nemeses of backyard gardeners, Runyon, 52, views them as the very staff of life and adventures in good eating.

An expert on weeds and other wild foods, and a strict vegetarian- "an environmentarian," she calls herself- Runyon's mission is to teach people that nutritious edibles are springing up all around us free for the picking. Her self-published *Lawn Food Cook Book* offers such delicacies as cattail stem soup, a quiche concocted of dandelions, and a casserole of brown rice and thistle root. With common weeds as the mainstay of one's diet, Runyon claims, it is entirely possible to reduce the monthly grocery bill to about $30 per person, not counting the time-cost of gathering the pesky produce. Her greatest triumph in transforming weeds into food occurred several years ago. "I fed 200 people off 10 square feet of grass," Runyon recalls. "I spent 10 or 15 minutes on the lawn every day, and in about three weeks I had enough weeds to rent the town hall at Indian Lake, N. Y., and serve 200 dinners." Paying just $3 a head, the townspeople were enthusiastic about the event, but Runyon was told she would have to get a restaurant license to do it again.

Giving an example of the wild riches available all around us, Runyon says she gets most of her own protein from just one lowly weed: by dining in clover. "If I don't eat it raw as salad, I dry the leaves in the oven- bring it to 300 degrees- and later crumble it to powder. It's the strongest flour there is, so I usually add a little whole wheat flour to dilute the herby taste. Around a campfire we would add some water and cook it on hot rocks to make pancakes."

Pine nuts, which Runyon calls "the chocolate of wild food," are her favorite snack. One problem, though, is that a cup contains 816 calories, "so I have to be careful," concedes the 5'2" Runyon, "because I gain weight." But for energy, she advises, "take a couple of pine needles, twist them in the middle and suck out the juice. Pine is loaded with vitamin C- one bough is the equivalent of a couple of crates of oranges. And a large tree theoretically could feed a whole town." Runyon hastens to add an important caveat for human grazers: Some plants are highly dangerous or potentially fatal. To keep foragers from toxic mistakes, Runyon sells a deck of "Wild Cards" ($10) with photos of the 52 safest common herbs. She's working on a companion deck of 15 common poisonous plants to avoid, such as mandrake and poison ivy. Plants subjected to weed or insect spray must be strictly avoided, of course, as should plants growing within 100 yards of roadways, because car exhaust contaminates them with cadmium and lead.

Before chowing down on unfamiliar plants, Runyon strongly recommends that the wild foodstuffs be identified through thc use of three separate, reliable field guides. Even after doing that, "I'll take a small piece, roll it between my fingers, rub the crushed piece on my gum and wait 20 minutes. If it doesn't get numb, itchy, or burn, I'll take another little piece of it and make a cup of very weak tea as a toxic test."

A twice-divorced New Jersey native who is a registered nurse, Runyon first developed an affinity for tasty weeds during childhood summers spent at a 430 acre Adirondack tourist camp owned by her grandparents. In 1972 she chose to return to a life in the wild in upstate New York. For 13 years she homesteaded with her second husband and her youngest



A Runyon flora-fest includes strawberry leaves (lower right), wild violets (top, center) and dried weeds (top, left).

Runyon enjoys visiting her grandchildren—Alec, 2 months, and Ceri, 3—at her son's home in Glens Falls, N.Y.

child, Todd (her other son, Eric, and her daughter, Kim, remained with their father in New Jersey), in spartan cabins and abandoned logging camps, where the cooking was done outdoors and much of the food was foraged. Out of necessity, Runyon gained a thorough knowledge of edible wild plants, most of them found in all parts of the U.S. The weed lady has written a field guide, and she now lectures extensively on the subject to Boy Scouts and ladies' garden clubs, among others.

As proof that nature does provide in unexpected ways, Runyon makes 14 varieties of herb vinegar and 18 different wild-food wines. Cattails are good in soup, she says, or can be boiled and eaten like corn on the cob, while the versatile and nutrition-laden lamb's-quarters leaves make a splendid flour. Even the widely scorned *Digitaria sanguinalis*—that's crabgrass—should not be disdained. With its "sweet, mild, oat bran-like flavor," says Runyon, it's terrific in cookies. Mrs. Fields, take note.

--Dan Chu,

Sorrel Soup

4 cups of sorrel leaves, washed
2 tsp. ofsarnower oil or olive oil
2 tsp. wheat germ
I chopped onion
4 cups nonfat dry milk or
4 cups water (Runyon's preference)

Take 4 cups leaves, place in pot, cover with water. Simmer slowly for 1/2 hour. Blend in other ingredients, simmer and strain. Serves 4.

Martha K. Babcock in the Adirondacks
Photographs by ©1989 Robin Bowman