

Graduates!

Sharla Strong Arizona State University

Thank you to my family and friends for all your encouragement and support to complete my master's degree. I received an M.S. in sustainable food systems and a graduate certificate in food policy and sustainability leadership.

Sharla and Jack Strong are pictured at the Arizona State University American Indian Convocation in May 2024.



Yellow Dock: Garden weed for food and medicine has many health benefits

By Nancy Ludwig, MS, RDN, LD,
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As part of my role as a consultant nutritionist to Siletz Tribal Head Start, I offer information for families and the community. This month my focus is on the common garden weed, yellow dock, which is delicious and packed with nutrition when grown in safe soil. This versatile and powerful weed can provide food from cooked leafy greens, crackers containing the dried seed and medicine from the root.



Health Benefits: Yellow dock (*Rumex crispus*) leaves are rich in vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, iron, potassium, manganese, magnesium and potassium. Yellow dock seeds are rich in fiber, protein, calcium and phosphorus.

In herbal medicine, yellow dock root is considered an alternative, which is an herb known to gradually restore the proper function of the body and increase health and vitality, without its mode of action being well understood.

Appearance: Yellow dock is a tall perennial with long sword-like leaves that have curly edges. The seeds start out green, but darken to a reddish brown with age. The seed stalks can reach 3-4 feet above the base of the plant. Below ground, yellow dock has a large, deep taproot that is yellowish-orange in color.

Geography: Yellow dock is found almost anywhere in the United States. You can find dock growing in disturbed areas and around gardens and fields. Yellow dock is native to Africa, temperate and tropical Asia, as well as Europe.

Edible Parts: The aerial parts (above ground) are food sources and the roots have strong medicinal values. Yellow dock's leaves can be cooked at any time so long as they are green. Leaves can be added to salads, cooked as a potherb or added to soups and stews.

Stems can be consumed raw or cooked, but they are best peeled and the inner portion consumed. Seeds can be eaten raw or cooked. The root contains the most medicinal properties.

Food Ideas and Recipes: Many wild greens can be bitter, yet dock greens

have a sour component. This summer, my favorite way to eat them was pan fried in bacon. Amazingly delicious.

I prefer to cook yellow dock leaves rather than consuming them raw with other salad greens. I understand that the leaves can be handy for smoothies because often the greens are big enough that a good handful of greens can provide an appealing sour taste.

Seeds are edible green or brown. For making dock seed flour, however they work best at the dark brown stage, fully dried. I understand that green dock seeds can be added to a pot of rice, as it cooks, for a subtle tart flavor. I haven't tried that yet, but I plan to.

I used dock seeds for the first time this year. I harvested them late summer/early fall, before the rainy season, after spotting them in my yard. They appeared as tall weeds in random locations, showing their brown seed stalks (see photo).

Apparently, yellow dock seeds can be used as a coffee substitute, but I haven't tried that yet. When I learned it was possible to make dock seed flour without needing to remove the chaff, I was inspired to try the recipe below to make crackers.

When making dock seed flour, collect the brown seeds, remove all leaves, stems or anything else to ensure you have only the seeds. Grind the seeds in a blender, a mortar and pestle or in a spice grinder. Once



ground, the flour can be stored in an airtight jar. Whole seeds can be stored in a paper bag for processing later.

Yellow Dock Crackers

- 1 cup crushed yellow dock seed (brown in color, with leaves and stems removed)
- 1 cup flour of your choice (I used cassava flour, which is gluten free)
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- Water, added carefully (I used 5-6 tablespoons)

In a bowl, mix together the crushed yellow dock seed, flour and salt. Add the water very slowly, until the dough is pliable (but not sticky). Roll dough thinly onto a well-floured surface. (I rolled out the dough between two wax papers.)

Cut into desired shapes and transfer them onto a well-greased baking sheet. (I did two batches with different types and amounts of oil. I found that the crackers tended to be crispier with ample fat on the pan.) Bake 10-12 minutes at 375°F or until crisp.

Medicine

The root contains the most medicinal properties. It can be boiled (or decocted) to make a bitter tea that detoxifies, helps the liver or skin ailments, and is used as a laxative. This bitter tonic can support bowel movements.

Dock doesn't force its rhythms on the body; it subtly tunes your internal organs so that your intestines and bowels can move in a more rhythmic way. In addition to preparing this

medicine as tea, the root is often tinctured (extracted) in alcohol.

Grief support was another powerful medicinal benefit I found. Yellow dock has been used in healing traditions for thousands of years.

In many Indigenous cultures, yellow dock's use extends beyond the digestive tract. Indigenous peoples – most notably the Cheyenne and Iroquois nations – have used a decoction of yellow dock root to treat lung and respiratory disorders, including cough, cold and throat aches, and hemorrhaging in the lung for thousands of years.

In Indigenous traditions, the lungs are thought to hold our grief. Grief is not only expelled through the exhalation of our lungs, but also through the exhalation or emptying of our bowels. As a mover of the bowels, yellow dock can be allied with grief workers of the plant world, helping our bodies to exhale our burdens so we can receive new life with every fresh breath of air.

Yellow dock is clearly a versatile and powerful ally, thought by many to be a common weed.

Please know that Siletz Tribal Head Start offers nutritional support at no cost to Head Start families. This usually occurs over the telephone. If you have nutrition concerns about your Head Start child or want to discuss family nutrition concerns, please contact your teacher or the director and ask to speak to the nutritionist. We want to support your children and families.

Reference Links

- <https://www.ediblewildfood.com/yellow-dock.aspx>
- <https://www.ediblewildfood.com/yellow-dock-crackers.aspx>
- <https://edgeeffects.net/yellow-dock/>
- https://identifythatplant.com/what-is-yellow-dock/?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email
- <https://foragerchef.com/dock-seed-flour/>