



What Every Survivalist Should Grow in His Backyard



by Claude Davis

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	6
ARUGULA	7
BEETS	8
BROCCOLI	10
CARROT	12
CHERRY TOMATO.....	14
CHICKWEED.....	16
CHOKEBERRY-BLACK.....	18
COMMON PLANTAIN.....	20
DANDELION	22
GREEN BEANS.....	24
KALE.....	26
KNOTWEED (BISTORT).....	28
OKRA.....	30
POMEGRANATE.....	32
POTATOES	34
PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS.....	36
RASPBERRIES.....	38
ROSE BAY WILLOW (FIREWEED).....	40
ROSEMARY	42
SEABERRY (SEA BUCKTHORN).....	44

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

SHEPHERD'S PURSE	46
STRAWBERRIES	48
STRAWBERRY TREE (CANE APPLE).....	50
WILD LEEKS.....	52

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

INTRODUCTION

When disaster strikes, being able to grow your own food is an essential skill that every survivalist should have. You will need to be completely self-sufficient when the cozy convenience of a corner grocery store is no longer available. You will only have yourself to rely on to keep starvation at bay, and it's best not to wait for an emergency to occur before you get your garden started.

There are lots of things that need to be taken into consideration when choosing what to grow in your survival garden. Hardy plants that can survive in harsh and unexpected circumstances will be invaluable to you. You will also want to choose plants that are high in nutrients and can do double duty as both food and medicine. Popping down to the pharmacy to get meds will most likely be a distant memory, right along with your local supermarket.

Another thing to think about, is having plants that will be available throughout the year. Many fruits and vegetables only grow during certain seasons, and they have short shelf lives. Having a constant source of food is vital to survival. Growing plants that can be pickled, dried, or preserved in some way is also a great idea.

There are many plants that do well in a number of climates. A few might be surprising to you, as they are normally considered to be pesky weeds that are hard to get rid of. The thing about weeds though, is that they can grow under difficult circumstances. They are survivors too!

In this book, you will find a list of plants that every survivalist should have growing in their backyard. There is information on how to grow, harvest, and store each plant, along with their nutritional and medicinal properties. Check with your local nursery to find out what plants might be best to start with in your area.

ARUGULA



Arugula is a delicious, hardy, and easy to grow green that tolerates a range of soil conditions and weather. It's native to France and Italy and does well in mild climates, but it can also be grown in winter, as long as the temperature doesn't get below 28 degrees. It also doesn't do well if the soil is too moist, so find a spot for it that has good drainage.

Health Benefits and Uses:

The leaves are considered a superfood, because they are packed with antioxidants like vitamin A and C, and the minerals iron, folic acid, and calcium. They can be eaten raw or cooked. The flowers are also edible, and can be eaten raw, or dried and used as a tea.

How to Plant Arugula:

This leafy green grows quickly, and germinates in about a week. It does the best if planted in sunny weather in the early spring, but it will tolerate most temperatures. It can be

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

planted directly in the soil. If you are planting in warmer weather, it will need some shade, as it is a cool weather plant. It can self- seed, so be sure to leave some room in your garden for it to spread.

Harvesting and Storage:

Arugula can be harvested about four weeks after it's planted. Pull leaves from the outside of the plant first, to promote growth. The older and larger the plant, the less tasty the leaves are, but it can be cut back and eaten for as long as needed. The leaves will last a few weeks when refrigerated. The blooms can also be harvested and dried.

BEETS



1

¹ Robert Couse-Baker (CC BY 2.0)

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

Beets are an easy to grow, hardy, long season crop. Almost every part of the plant can be eaten and used medicinally. They tolerate heat well, but prefer cooler climates, and can withstand frost. The taproots can be stored long term, and can even be pickled, which is a great way to store food.

Health Benefits and Uses:

Beetroot can be eaten raw, roasted, boiled, or pickled, so it's versatile as far as preparation goes. The leaves of the plant can be eaten raw or cooked. The texture and flavor is similar to spinach. Beets are antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and are good edible that will help keep the body healthy in the long term.

How to Plant Beets:

The seeds can be planted directly into a prepared bed that's as free from rocks as possible. Beets will grow in rocky soil, but too much debris can hinder the roots progress. The less packed the soil, the better. The seeds can be spaced about an inch apart. As they grow, thin them out to about three inches apart. A nice trick to regrow beet greens, is to cut the top of a beet off and put it in water.

Harvesting and Storage:

Beets can be harvested at any time during their growth, but they taste the best when the root's been left in the ground for about fifty days. The entire plant can then be pulled out and used. The greens will last a couple of weeks in cold storage, but the beetroot will last for months if it's kept in near freezing conditions. If this isn't an option, then the root can be pickled with salt, sugar, and vinegar. Pickled beets can be stored without refrigeration for up to a year.

BROCCOLI



²

Broccoli is easy to grow and loves cold weather. It germinates well in temperatures as low as 40 degrees. It's a tough plant that's packed with nutrients, so it's a great addition to a survivalist's garden. It does need to be replanted every year, but if you do it right, you might be able to get more than one harvest out of it.

Health Benefits and Uses

Broccoli has the highest content of vitamin C of all of the cruciferous vegetables, with 135% of your daily allowance. It's also packed with other nutrients, including fiber, vitamins B6 and K, potassium, and omega 3, just to name a few. It's highly anti-inflammatory, and its content fiber is good for keeping the bowels regular. Broccoli heads and stems can be eaten raw, steamed, baked, sautéed, or boiled. The leaves of the plant can also be eaten raw or cooked.

² Broccoli - Toshiyuki IMAI (CC BY-SA 2.0)

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

How to Plant Broccoli

Broccoli seeds germinate best between 40 and 85 degrees, so plant them in the spring or fall. The seeds need to be about a half inch down and spaced a foot apart. They prefer moist soil and full sun, so only grow this crop if you have plenty of both.

Harvesting and Storage

It's a slow growing plant, and can take anywhere from 80 to 200 days to flower, depending on the breed and what time of year planting occurs. Broccoli is harvested before it flowers. Cut the plants stem just above where it branches. Heads will continue to grow off the side of the plant, so don't pull the plant out until the heads finally stop growing. Fresh broccoli will last in cold storage for a couple of weeks, but it also freezes well if it's blanched first.

CARROT



³

Carrots are a tough root vegetable that are disease resistant and can grow in fairly poor soil. They don't do well if conditions are extremely moist and warm, as they are prone to rot, but they are a great vegetable for dry, cool environments. They are packed with nutrients, and like most root vegetables, have a long shelf life.

Health Benefits and Uses

Most people know that carrots are good for vision, due to their high concentrations of beta carotene. Carrots are also helpful for indigestion, lowering blood pressure, and boosting

³ Carrots - Carota – Wortels - color line (CC BY 2.0)

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

the immune system. The entire plant can be eaten raw, but the greens taste better when they are cooked, as they can be a little tough and bitter.

How to Plant Carrots

Carrots grow best planted in rows and spread a few inches apart, in loose soil. If you only have heavy soil, they will still grow, just a little more stunted than normal. Cover the seeds with about one half inch of dirt. Don't over water, as the seeds are tiny and might wash away. Keep the carrot patch free of weeds and other plants, as their root systems damage easily.

Harvesting and Storage

Carrots taste better the bigger they grow, but they can be harvested no matter what size they are. You can either pull them out and eat them as needed, or harvest them all at the same time, preferably before the first frost. To store them, cut the greens off and keep them in a cool, dry place without washing them. They will keep for months if packed in a peat box covered with straw.

CHERRY TOMATO



Cherry tomatoes are probably the easiest fruits to grow, and they are quite prolific. One plant can produce up to fifteen pounds of tomatoes per year. They will grow in just about any type of soil and don't take up much space, but they don't grow well in the cold. If the plants are established in the warmer months, though, they should get through the cold season quite nicely.

Health Benefits and Uses

Tomatoes are a rich source of vitamin C, potassium, beta-carotene, folic acid, and potassium. Eating them raw or drinking them as juice will help keep your blood pressure regulated. Dried tomatoes can alleviate diarrhea very quickly and are almost as effective as medication. They are a great food for general health and wellness, and can be eaten raw, stewed, juiced, or dried.

⁴ Cherry tomatoes - Thomas Quine (CC BY 2.0)

How to Plant Cherry Tomatoes

Tomato seedlings thrive on hot weather, so you can plant them anytime in those conditions. They need about three months of warm to hot conditions in order to germinate and grow. They can be planted in a seed tray indoors, or if the weather is consistently warm, outside in a sunny spot. A bush variety needs about two feet between plants, while vines only need a foot. Keep the seeds constantly moist until they sprout, then they just need to be watered a couple of times a week. Prune them regularly to keep them producing.

Harvesting and Storage

Cherry tomatoes will grow as long as the weather is warm, but they usually are the most prolific during the late summer and autumn months. Twist the ripe fruit off of the vine, but don't pull on it, because that can damage the vine. The tomatoes will last a few weeks in cold storage. They also do well frozen, dried, or canned.

CHICKWEED



Chickweed is one of those plants that's almost impossible to keep out of your garden, which makes it a perfect plant for survivalists. It's a multifunctional plant, with edible and extremely nutritious leaves, medicinal properties, and its presence in the garden attracts beneficial insects. It's also considered a nutrient accumulator, which helps keep a garden healthy, because it keeps the soil well fed. It can be grown in extreme heat, dry or overly moist conditions, and even in a mild winter.

Health Benefits and Uses:

Growing chickweed is beneficial for both your body and your garden. Its leaves are highly nutritious and can be eaten raw or cooked. They have long been used medicinally as a poultice for itchy skin. They can also be added to water and used as a soak to alleviate inflammation from conditions like rheumatism.

⁵ Water Chickweed – Sarah (CC BY 2.0)

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

How to Plant Chickweed:

It's a weed, so it's incredibly easy to grow and doesn't need a lot of care. If you can find a flowering plant in the summertime, shake it over the soil where you want it to grow, then give it a good watering. There will be chickweed plants in the spring, guaranteed. They only need to be sown once, and will grow on their own in the future.

Harvesting and Storage:

Harvesting chickweed is just as easy as planting it. Cut the leaves off with a pair of scissors, leaving at least an inch of stem. A second crop will grow out of it a few weeks later. The leaves will keep fresh for a week or so when refrigerated. They can also be dried and stored for long periods of time for medicinal purposes. To keep them from becoming invasive, keep them from going to seed by cutting off the flower heads.

CHOKEBERRY-BLACK



6

Black chokeberry is a North American bush that will grow easily if left to its own devices. It's a shrub that grows highly nutritious berries from summer until winter. The plants prefer little water, so it's a good shrub to grow in drought conditions. They can also withstand freezing temperatures, are highly resistant to fungus, and rarely have a problem with pests.

⁶ Black Chokeberry - Gene Selkov (CC BY 2.0)

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

Health Benefits and Uses:

Chokeberries are anti-inflammatory and have astringent properties. The tart tasting berries can be eaten raw, but more often than not are made into preserves, juice, syrups, and wine. They are also antioxidant, so they can help stave off winter colds and flus.

How to Plant Chokeberry:

The plants prefer full sun, and will tolerate most types of soil. The seeds should be planted at least 7 feet apart in the early spring. They can also easily be grown from root cuttings. Make sure the plants are watered, but don't drown them, as they don't need much moisture.

Harvesting and Storage:

Chokeberries grow from summer to winter. The early fruit can be plucked off of the bush and eaten raw, but tends to get extremely tart in the later months. The best way to store the berry is in preserves or juices. Freshly picked berries will keep in cold storage for about a month, and the preserves will last for up to a year.

COMMON PLANTAIN



7

If you've got grass in your yard, then you've probably pulled Common Plantain out on a regular basis. This feisty weed tends to show up in compacted soil. While it doesn't taste that great, it is edible, highly nutritious, and has many medicinal properties. It's also extremely easy to grow and needs little care. It can handle all types of soil, climates, and weather, so it's a good survivalist plant to have on hand.

Health Benefits and Uses:

Plantain is high in vitamins A, C, and K, and is considered to be a cure-all by folk medicine practitioners. The powdered seeds are used to calm nausea and cool down a fever. The seeds can also be ground down and used as flour to make bread. The leaves can be eaten raw, but only the youngest have a good flavor. They tend to get tough and bitter the longer

⁷ Common Plantain - Calin Darabus (CC BY 2.0)

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

they stay on the plant. Medicinally, the leaves can be made into a poultice and used for stings and rashes. The stems of the bloom can also be eaten when boiled.

How to Plant Common Plantain:

Plantain easily grows just about anywhere that has compact soil and sun, so find a plant in the springtime, dig it up, and replant it where you want it to grow. If you are growing it from seed, simply sprinkle the seeds onto the soil, water it, and wait for it to grow. It's that simple.

Harvesting and Storage:

Plantain can be harvested as soon as the leaves grow. Cut them off as needed, making sure to leave some root so that it can regrow. Like many weeds, the plants are self-fertile. The freshly picked leaves will keep for a couple of weeks in refrigeration or cold storage. They can also be dried for medicinal use and stored indefinitely. To keep the plant from becoming invasive, make sure to keep them from going to seed.

DANDELION



Dandelion is one of the most common weeds that can be found, and possibly the most beneficial. Its leaves and roots can be eaten, the flowers made into tea, and it can be grown just about anywhere. It can withstand heat, cold, drought, and overwatering. It's also highly medicinal for the body and nutrient rich for garden soil. It's a wonder that people see this plant as pesky.

Health Benefits and Uses:

Dandelion greens are considered a superfood, containing a high content of vitamin C, potassium, magnesium, iron, beta carotene, fiber, thiamin, and riboflavin. It's almost the perfect plant. The flowers can be eaten fresh, or dried and made into tea. They are a fairly bitter green, but if they are grown in shade, or a "gourmet" variety is grown, they can taste quite good. In your garden, dandelions attract beneficial insects like pollinators, and lady bugs, which eat destructive pests.

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

How to Plant Dandelion:

Chances are there is a yard full of dandelions somewhere nearby, and all you would need to do is dig up a few and replant them where you want them. If not, the seeds can be planted in a sunny area, in moist soil, about a quarter of an inch down. They germinate better in warmer weather, so spring is the best time to plant.

Harvesting and Storage:

Dandelion can be harvested by pulling the entire plant once it's flowered, or by snipping off leaves as needed. Like other weeds and greens, leave at least an inch from the roots so that they can re-grow. To keep them from becoming invasive, harvest them before they go to seed. The flower and plant will keep for a couple of weeks in cold storage, and they can also be dried for medicinal use and to make tea.

GREEN BEANS



Green beans are a great crop for people with little gardening knowledge. They are easy to grow and can tolerate most soil conditions and climates. There are quite a few different varieties, from pole beans that can also provide shade and take up less room, to bush beans, which are less work to grow and harvest.

Health Benefits and Uses

Green beans are a good source of carbohydrates, protein, vitamins, and minerals. Their high fiber content helps the belly to feel full and keeps it from grumbling. They can be eaten raw if necessary, but they taste best cooked. They are also a good canning vegetable, which is great for storing.

How to Plant Green Beans

Pole beans need a trellis or stake to climb up. Plant the seeds in a sunny spot of the garden in the spring, about an inch down. If your soil is really sandy, plant them a little bit deeper. Bush beans need about two feet between each plant. Keep the soil moist, but don't over water the plants.

Harvesting and Storage

Your harvest will be ready in the summer. Pick beans that are firm and relatively large. It's fine to snap the beans off of the plant, but they can also be cut. They can be stored in a dry area for a few weeks, and will continue to ripen. They can be canned or pickled for a longer shelf life.

KALE



Kale is a hardy green that can tolerate both heat and frost. Some plants will even continue to produce leaves during the cold winter months, and can grow in 20 degree weather. It's also considered to be one of the most nutrient dense edibles on the planet.

Health Benefits and Uses:

It's considered a superfood, with very high levels of vitamin C, A, and K, and most of its fat content comes from omega 3. It's one of the most nutrient rich foods available, so you don't have to eat a lot of it to get the nutrients that you need. Kale can be eaten raw or cooked, juiced, or baked and made into kale chips.

⁸ Kale - Dwight Sipler (CC BY 2.0)

How to Plant Kale

Kale can be planted from early spring to late summer. Summer is the best season for it, because your harvest will last from the fall until the ground freezes over. Plant the seeds about a foot apart, one half inch down into well drained soil. Kale plants prefer full sunlight.

Harvesting and Storage

Kale is ready to harvest when the leaves are about the size of an adult hand. They can be eaten at any size, though. Pull the leaves off with your hands, but be careful to leave the bud growing at the top center of the plant. This will keep your plant producing leaves longer. If you cover the plants during a frost, they might continue to produce into the winter months. The leaves will stay fresh for about a week after harvest. They can be cooked and canned, or baked and stored in bags for a longer shelf life.

KNOTWEED (BISTORT)



⁹

Knotweed is an annual weed that, like most plants that are considered invasive, is extremely easy to grow and care for. The bigger problem with having it in your garden is keeping it under control. The Australians are so concerned about the Japanese variety, that it's illegal in that country to grow on your property. It's a great edible plant, though, that can be grown under difficult conditions, whether hot or cold.

Health Benefits and Uses:

The young leaves are a rich source of zinc, and can be used as a pot herb. The seeds can be dried and used as a cracked grain, or ground into powder and used as a flour like buckwheat. The leaves are used medicinally as an astringent, and to treat dysentery.

⁹ Knotweed – dankogreen (CC BY 2.0)

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

How to Plant Knotweed:

Knotweed can grow just about anywhere and prefers full sunlight, but if you are growing it in a hot weather climate, give your plants partial shade. The seeds can be sown directly into the garden in the summertime or late spring, when temperatures are in the 60's or 70's, about two feet apart. They don't need a lot of water to grow, but if you want the plants to flower, keep them fairly moist. They take about four weeks to germinate. They can make a good hedge around your garden, as they keep out rabbits and deer.

Harvesting and Storage:

Harvest by pulling the entire rootstock in the autumn. When the rootstock and seeds are dried, they can be stored indefinitely. The plants become very bitter as they age, so if they are going to be eaten fresh, it's best to pull them when they are young.

OKRA



¹⁰

Okra is a favorite vegetable of the south. It's easy to grow, but it does need a lot of moisture and takes its time germinating. This plant is worth the wait, though, as it's delicious and full of fiber and other nutrients. It grows best in tropical climates, but can be grown where it's arid, as long as there is enough water.

Health Benefits and Uses:

Okra pods are one of the lowest calorie vegetables available, but they have lots of fiber, carbs, and protein. Remedies made from the juiced fruit and leaves have traditionally been used to treat inflammation of all types, diarrhea, stomach aches, and sore throats. Recent

¹⁰ Chuck Osley - <http://www.examiner.com/>

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

studies have shown that it can help control diabetes. The plant mucilage can also be used as a stabilizer in foods and lotions. The leaves, pods, and seeds can all be eaten.

How to Plant Okra:

The seeds have a hard shell, so to speed up germination, soak them in water overnight before planting. The fiercer the heat, the better this plant grows, so give it a sunny spot. Wait for stable weather in the spring to get them started. Plant the seeds an inch down and about two feet apart.

Harvesting and Storage

Harvest the okra pods when they are green and immature. If the stem is difficult to cut, they are probably too ripe to eat. Some varieties have little hairs on them that are irritating to the skin, so wear gloves. Don't wash the pods until you are going to use them, as this decreases the shelf life. They last in cool storage for about a week, but can also be canned for a longer shelf life.

POMEGRANATE



11

The pomegranate tree has been cultivated for food since ancient times. Desert caravans in the Middle East used to carry potted trees with them because of their juicy, thirst-quenching fruit. These small trees have been known to last for centuries, and are relatively easy to grow in dry, hot climates. They can even be grown in containers, which makes them a great plant for survivalists, as they can be easily moved to different locations.

¹¹ Pomegranates - <https://pattihaskins.wordpress.com/>

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

Health Benefits and Uses:

Pomegranates are considered one of the healthiest fruits around. The delicious arils contain fiber, vitamins C and K, protein, folate, and potassium. They also have compounds which are extremely anti-inflammatory, ease joint pain, help with diabetes, lower blood pressure, and fight bacterial and fungal infections.

How to Plant Pomegranate:

Rooted cuttings or seedlings which have been grown indoors can be planted any time of the year. The seeds need to be planted with about a half inch of loose soil covering them, in a place with lots of sun. They take about a month to germinate. A great way to get them to germinate quickly is to put a wet coffee filter and clean pomegranate seeds into a sealable plastic baggie. Put the baggie on a windowsill that gets lots of sunlight and check it every few days. When they sprout, plant them in soil. It usually takes at least a year for the tree to bear fruit.

Harvesting and Storage:

The fruits ripen about six months after flowering, and much like apples, they have a nice long shelf life. If they are kept in cold storage with low humidity, they can last up to seven months. They become even more delicious the longer they sit. They can be plucked right off of the tree, but for best results, they should be clipped off, so that they aren't damaged.

POTATOES



¹²

Potatoes are a great crop for the survivalists' garden. They can be grown vertically, so if there is little space, or the ground is extremely hard or too moist, it won't be a problem. They can be grown from an old sprouting potato, and very little effort is needed to tend to them. They are filling, which is important if food is scarce, full of fiber, and highly nutritious.

Health Benefits and Uses:

Potatoes are a good source of fiber, vitamins C and B6, potassium, manganese, and niacin. They also contain antioxidants, which are beneficial for general health. Drinking raw potato juice a few times a day is also an old folk medicine remedy for rheumatoid arthritis and diarrhea. They can be baked, fried, sautéed, or even eaten raw if necessary.

¹² Kartoffeln – FrauWeibsvolk (CC BY-ND 2.0)

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

How to Plant Potatoes:

You can easily grow potatoes in a tower just about anywhere. The best time to plant is after the last frost in late spring. A potato tower can be made out of old tires, a garbage can, or chicken wire. The soil needs to have good drainage, but still be kept moist. Fill the bottom of whatever you are using for a tower with some hay or dried grass. Then put a few inches of soil on top of that and a few pieces of cut potato that are sprouting. Cover them with a few inches of dirt and another layer of hay. When the plants start coming up out of the hay, do another layer of dirt and hay, making sure to leave a little bit of leaf peeking out. If you are using chicken wire, quite often the plants will grow out of the side of the tower, which is fine. Make sure not to overwater, as potatoes can be prone to rot when they get too wet.

Harvesting and Storage:

Your potato crop will be ready to harvest after about ten weeks. Once the leaves of the plant brown, then you know that it's time. Dig them up as soon as the vines die, though, or they could rot. Potatoes have a nice long shelf life as long as they are stored in a cool, dry place. Don't wash them before storage, or keep them with apples, which cause them to spoil.

PRICKLY PEAR CACTUS



13

In severe heat, or dry climates, edible cactus is a must have in the garden. Every part of the prickly pear cactus is edible, and while harvesting is a bit of work, growing them is really easy. The pads can be eaten year round, so having a few plants can be a constant source of nutrients

Health Benefits and Uses:

Prickly pears are high in fiber, vitamin C, calcium, and antioxidants. They can help keep bowel movements regular, regulate blood sugar, and lower blood pressure. The juice of the fruit is quite thirst quenching, and also contain flavonoids, which are good for eye health. . The pads taste a little like green beans, and can be eaten raw, steamed, boiled, or sautéed.

¹³ prickly pear fruit - miheco (CC BY-SA 2.0)

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

How to Plant Prickly Pear:

The easiest way to plant prickly pear is using a cutting in a container. The cutting should be from a healthy plant and from a pad that's around six months old. They can be grown inside, as long as the container gets a decent amount of sunlight. The soil should be at least 60 degrees in temperature, in order for the cutting to root. Bury about a third of the cutting, leaving the rest above the dirt. Water it lightly about once a week. If the container is outside, make sure that if you are in rainy conditions, that you keep it from getting too wet.

Harvesting and Storage:

Prickly pears have thorns, so wearing heavy gloves and using a pair of kitchen tongs is the best way to harvest both the fruit and the pads. The fruits will usually grow during the rainy season, so either in the spring or early fall. When the fruit is ripe, it's a deep red color and can easily be plucked from the pads with tongs. Make sure to leave one or two for new cactus generation. The pads can be cut at any time during the year, but taste the best right after it rains. The cactus thorns can be removed with a vegetable peeler. Both the fruit and pads can be stored for a month or so, in a cool, dry area.

RASPBERRIES



14

There are plenty of varieties of raspberry that will suit whatever climate you live in. They are easy to grow, prefer neglected soil, and won't need much help once they've been established. There are also everbearing plants which will produce berries for months, and their canes will often survive the winter for a spring harvest.

Health Benefits and Uses:

Raspberries have high amounts of tannins in them, so they've been traditionally used to treat diarrhea, hemorrhoids, and sore throats. An infusion of the leaves can be taken by pregnant women to help with nausea and increase their milk production. The berries are a great source of vitamin C, manganese, and fiber. They can be eaten raw, or made into juice and preserves.

¹⁴ Fall Raspberry bounty - Ian Irving (CC BY 2.0)

How to Plant Raspberries:

Raspberry bushes prefer full sun, but if you are growing them in a hot climate, try to find a spot that has some shade in the afternoon. Red raspberries do better with something to climb, but the black and purple varieties are bushy and need more room. The soil should be well aerated. Plant in the early spring, spreading the seeds about three feet apart. Keep them moist but don't over water.

Harvesting and Storage

The raspberry plant starts producing fruit in its second year. You can tell when they are ripe because they can be easily plucked from the vines. Keep the canes pruned to encourage growth. The berries will keep in cold storage for about a week, but they can be made into jams and preserves and stored for long periods of time that way.

ROSE BAY WILLOW (FIREWEED)



15

Rose Bay Willow is also called “fireweed,” because it tends to be one of the first plants to sprout up after a fire. Despite its name, it usually lies dormant in hot weather. It grows the best in the autumn and spring months, but is a hardy plant that can become invasive if you’re not paying attention. It grows easily in soggy soil, so it’s not a problem to plant in an area that experiences flooding or is extremely moist.

¹⁵ Shyamal CC BY 3.0

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

Health Benefits and Uses:

The leaves, young shoots, and roots contain vitamins B, C, and A, and riboflavin. The shoots can be prepared and eaten the same way as asparagus. The roots can be dried and ground, then used as a coffee substitute. They are also edible and can be boiled like an artichoke. The leaves don't taste that great, but they can be used as a tea, mostly for medicinal reasons. They can help ease a cough and asthma. The powdered root can be used to alleviate diarrhea, while the stems can be used as a laxative.

How to Plant Rose Bay Willow:

The seeds can be planted directly into the soil, as long as it's really moist and in full sunlight. The best time to plant it is in the fall. The fall is also the best time to collect the seeds from fully grown plants. Only plant a few seeds, as they reproduce quickly. Plant them about a half of an inch down, and cover them with dirt, without packing it down too tightly. Keep the plants really moist until the plants well established, when it doesn't need much watering.

Harvesting and Storage:

The leaves and shoots can be harvested just like most greens, by plucking them as needed. If the roots are needed, pull the entire plant after it has bloomed, usually in the fall. The roots can be dried and stored indefinitely. The leaves will last for a couple of weeks in cold storage.

ROSEMARY



16

Rosemary is a hardy aromatic shrub that will grow in most climates, and can withstand drought for long periods of time. It has a multitude of uses as a kitchen herb, medicine, and food preservative. It's extremely easy to grow and not very picky about soil conditions. However, it doesn't do very well in extremely moist soil.

Health Benefits and Uses:

Rosemary tastes good and is used for flavoring dishes, especially meats. It's a good source of vitamin B6 and iron, but even better as a preservative that keeps food from rotting. When made into an extract, it can be rubbed into meat to extend its shelf life. Rosemary also has many medicinal uses. The leaves can be thrown into hot water and the steam breathed in to get rid of a cold and sooth a cough, as it's got antibacterial and antispasmodic properties. It can also be made into a lotion and rubbed onto sore muscles.

¹⁶ Rosemary Bush - Tony Alter (CC BY 2.0)

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

How to Plant Rosemary:

Rosemary is easy to grow from cuttings and can be planted any time of the year, except for in heavy frost. Spring is the best time, though, as it tends to root when the temperature gets warmer. Regardless, a cutting will grow leaves and stay healthy for months before it roots. Take a few of the leaves off of a sprig and stick it in dirt. You can also stick cuttings into a glass of water and wait for the roots to grow.

Harvesting and Storage:

Cuttings can be taken from the plant as needed. As long as the plant has root left, it will continue to grow. They will stay fresh for a few weeks, and will eventually dry out. When that happens, they can be broken up and stored in jars, or even hung up in bunches.

SEABERRY (SEA BUCKTHORN)



17

Seaberry is a hardy shrub that can be grown in some of the worst conditions. Originally from Russia and Siberia, it can withstand extremely cold temperatures and drought. Its berries appear in the summer and will often continue to grow throughout the winter season. While the berries are fairly tart, they are highly nutritious and delicious when

¹⁷ Hippophae rhamnoides Photo by Svdmolén CC BY-SA 3.0

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

sweetened and made into jam. They also contain high levels of vitamin C, which is important in the winter months when other citrus fruits are rarely available.

Health Benefits and Uses:

A serving of Seaberry contains seven times the vitamin C of a lemon. It also has omegas 3, 6, 7, and 9, as well as a number of other antioxidants. It's been used for thousands of years in Asia and Russia as a cure-all. When rubbed directly onto the skin, it aids in healing cuts and burns. The berries can be eaten raw, but they are tart, kind of like cranberries. They taste better when mixed with sugar and made into a jam or juice. However, some people quite enjoy their flavor unsweetened.

How to Plant Seaberry:

Seaberries are easy to grow, but it's important to get a male and female plant, as both are needed to produce fruit. Plant them in full sun in the springtime. They will grow in just about any soil, including sand and gravel. Keep the plants about three to six feet apart. One male can pollinate up to five females.

Harvesting and Storage:

It takes a couple of years for a Seaberry bush to begin producing fruit, but once it does, it's prolific. One bush can produce up to fifty pounds of berries! The berries are most ripe in the late summer and fall, but will often continue to grow into winter. They can be plucked off of the bush, but watch out for thorns. They will keep in cold storage for about a month. Make them into preserves and they can last for up to a year.

SHEPHERD'S PURSE



18

While Shepherd's Purse is considered a nuisance in many parts of the world, the Japanese cultivate it as a spring green. It's a common garden weed that produces seeds year round, and will grow just about anywhere. This plant will thrive in any type of soil, in most temperatures, but does best in a temperate climate. Since it constantly produces seeds and self-fertilizes, replanting is unnecessary. The plant tastes a bit like cabbage and has powerful medicinal properties.

Health Benefits and Uses:

The leaves are a mild tasting mustard green, and rich in vitamins K, C, and A, protein, potassium, iron, and calcium. The seedpods can also be eaten, but most people find them to be bland. Shepherd's Purse is often used in childbirth to strengthen contractions, so pregnant women should stay away from it. It's also used as a diuretic and to stop bleeding.

¹⁸ Capsella bursa-pastoris plant - Harry Rose (CC BY 2.0)

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

How to Plant Shepherd's Purse:

Sowing the seeds in the spring will give you the best results, but they can also be sown up until August. They don't need any help growing. Just give them water every once in a while. They will start producing leaves about a month after they've been planted.

Harvesting and Storage:

The greens taste the best about a month after they've grown, and can be harvested any time. Simply cut the leaves that you want to use, making sure to leave at least an inch or so of plant near the root for regrowth. The greens will last a couple of weeks in cold storage, but since the plant will grow year round, fresh leaves will always be available.

STRAWBERRIES



Strawberry plants aren't known for being tough and easy to grow in the garden, but they make a great houseplant. In fact, they are one of the few fruits that can be grown indoors, which is what makes them a good choice for a survivalist. Certain types of strawberries called "everbearers," like the Alpine strawberry, will produce fruit at least twice a year, and sometimes more.

Health Benefits and Uses

Strawberries have been used for thousands of years as a medicine to treat gout, jaundice, and rheumatism. The seeds are the part of the plant that contains the healing properties, but the entire fruit packs a powerful nutritional punch. Strawberries have high vitamin C content, as well as other antioxidants. They can be eaten raw, or made into jams, juice, and tea.

How to Plant Strawberries

Strawberries have an extremely shallow root system, so you can use just about anything to plant them in. You can buy a strawberry tower or make your own, which will use the least amount of space and give you the most yield. If you are growing from seed, use a seed tray to get them started. Sprinkle the seeds into soil and cover them with a loose layer. Use a spray bottle to water them. Once the seedlings grow a third leaf, they can be replanted in pots or a tower.

Harvesting and Storage

Cut off the flowers the first season, so that the plants can become stronger. They will generate more fruit the next season. The berries will be ripe a few weeks after the plants blossom, and can be cut from the plant. Don't pull them, as that could cause damage. Pick them every three days, as that will keep the plant producing. The berries will last off of the plant for about three weeks. They do well frozen, and when made into preserves or dried, they will last indefinitely.

STRAWBERRY TREE (CANE APPLE)



19

The Strawberry Tree is an unconventional, often overlooked fruit tree that thrives in hot weather and drought conditions. It's usually planted as an ornamental, but its red fruit is tasty and easy to grow in hot, dry climates with poor soil. It's native to many Mediterranean countries, but also grows in Ireland and Western Europe, which means that it can grow in cooler climates. It can do with little water and doesn't need a lot of room, due to its smaller size. It can be kept as a tree or a shrub.

Health Benefits and Uses:

The fruit of the Strawberry Tree is rich in vitamin C, fiber, and carotenoid, which helps with vision. Traditional folk medicine practitioners use the juice as a tonic for rheumatism and as an antiseptic. The fruit can be eaten raw, but can also be made into jam, juice, and liqueur.

¹⁹ August Dominus (CC BY-SA 3.0) and Bachelot Pierre J-P (CC BY-SA 1.0)

How to Plant a Strawberry Tree:

Strawberry Trees are best planted in the spring when they are young because they don't tend to do well when they are moved around. Pick a spot in the garden that has good drainage, lots of sunlight, and isn't prone to waterlogging. If you want to plant a tree from seed, it will need to be done in a planter in the fall. If the weather gets cold in the winter, young trees will need to be kept warm, but as they mature, they tolerate the cold fairly well.

Harvesting and Storage:

The fruit usually ripens in the fall and will drop to the ground when it's fully ripe. If the earth around the tree is hard, it's best to put some hay or even a blanket under the tree during harvest time, as the fruit can get damaged when it falls. It will stay fresh in cold storage for a month or so. When made into jam, it can be stored for at least a year.

WILD LEEKS



Wild Leeks are a delicious plant that can grow in extremely moist conditions. They grow wild in the Appalachian forests, so they are the perfect plant to grow after a flood, or in a wooded area. The entire plant can be eaten, from green to bulb, and they are highly nutritious and filling.

Health Benefits and Uses:

Wild Leeks are rich in vitamins A and K, folic acid, niacin, and magnesium. They are also high in antioxidants, and are anti-bacterial and anti-viral. Cooking them up in a stew will keep a cold away. The leaves can be cooked as a “green,” and the bulbs can be used just like an onion.

How to Plant Wild Leeks:

WHAT EVERY SURVIVALIST SHOULD GROW IN HIS BACKYARD

Leek seeds can be sown any time, as long as the ground isn't frozen. They tend to do the best when sown in the summer, though. The seed will germinate in the following spring. Let the patch alone for a year or two, and give it time to spread out before harvesting, so that you only have to plant once.

Harvesting and Storage:

Leeks are best harvested in the early spring. They grow in clusters, so just take a few from the outer part of the cluster. Don't yank the entire plant out, unless you don't plan on growing more. Use your fingers and pull them off individually. Fresh leeks will keep for a couple of weeks. They can also be frozen, or dried for later use in soups or stews.