

Edible plant stem

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Edible plant stems are one part of plants that are eaten by humans. Most plants are made up of roots, stems, leaves, flowers, buds and produce fruits containing seeds. Humans most commonly eat the seeds (e.g. maize, wheat, coffee and various nuts), fruit (e.g. tomato), leaves (e.g. lettuce, spinach, and cabbage), or roots (e.g. carrots and beets), but humans also eat the stems of many plants (e.g. asparagus). There are also a few edible petioles (leaf stalks) such as celery, as well as some edible flowers.

Plant stems have a variety of functions. Stems support the entire plant and have buds, leaves, flowers, and fruits. Stems are also a vital connection between leaves and roots. They conduct water and mineral nutrients through {xylem} tissue from roots upward, and organic compounds and some mineral nutrients through phloem tissue in any direction within the plant. Apical meristems, located at the shoot tip and axillary buds on the stem, allow plants to increase in length, surface, and mass. In some plants, such as cactus, stems are specialized for photosynthesis and water storage.

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Modified stems

Typical stems are located above ground, but there are modified stems that can be found either above or below ground. Modified stems located above ground are crowns, stolons, runners, or spurs. Modified stems located below ground are bulbs (which are actually primarily the enlarged base of the plant's leaves), corms, rhizomes, and tubers.

Detailed description of edible plant stems

Asparagus

The edible portion is the rapidly emerging stems that arise from the crowns in the

Bamboo

The edible portion is the young shoot (culm).

Birch

Trunk sap is drunk as a tonic or rendered into birch syrup, vinegar, beer, soft drinks, and other foods.

Broccoli

The edible portion is stem tissue, flower buds, and some small leaves.

Cauliflower

The edible portion is proliferated stem and flower tissue.

Celery

The whole plant is edible including the crisp petiole (leaf stalk) and the fleshy taproot.

Cinnamon

The bark is used as a spice.

Fig

The edible portion is stem tissue. The fig "fruit" is actually an inverted flower with both the male and female flower parts enclosed inside stem tissue.

Garlic

The edible portion is predominantly swollen leaves with a bit of stem.

Ginger root

The edible portion is a branched underground compressed stem also referred to as a rhizome.

Kohlrabi

The edible portion is an enlarged (swollen) stem. It is a member of the cabbage family and is white, green, or purple in color.

Leek

Similar to other members in the onion family, the edible portion is swollen leaves with a bit of stem.

Lotus root

The edible portion is a stem modified for underwater growth. Buds and branches are visible on the vegetable sold as lotus root.

Kupal

The edible portion is stem segments.

Onion

The edible portion is swollen leaves with a bit of stem. They are bulbs which, like garlic and leeks, are modified stems in which the primary storage tissue is expanded leaf bases. They come in white, yellow, and red varieties.

Potato

The edible portion is an underground stem that is also a tuber. The "eyes" of the potato are lateral buds. Potatoes come in white, yellow, orange, or purple-colored varieties.

Radish

The whole plant is edible, but it is commonly grown for the root.

Rhubarb

The red or green stalks are the edible portion; the leaves are toxic.

Sassafras

The shoots and stem bark are sometimes used to make root beer.

Shallot

Also a member of the onion family, the edible portion is mainly swollen leaves with a bit of stem.

Sugar cane

The edible portion is the inner stalk (stem) whose sap is a source of sugar. In its raw form chewing or extraction through a juicer extracts its juice.

Sugar maple

Phloem sap from the tree trunks is made into maple sugar and maple syrup.

Taro

The edible portion is the underground stem (corm).

White pine

The sweet inner bark (phloem) was eaten by Native Americans.

Andean Tubers & Roots as per: https://courses.cit.cornell.edu/vicosperu/vicos-site/biodiversity_page_4.htm ulluco oca mashua arracacha yacon mauka achira ahipa maca

Some wild plants with edible stems

There are also many wild edible plant stems. In North America, these include the shoots of common milkweed, Solomon's seal, wood sorrel (usually eaten with the leaves), blackberry and raspberry (peeled), chickweeds, galinsoga, common purslane, Japanese knotweed, saxifrage, cleavers, wild leeks, wild onion, nodding onion, field garlic, wild garlic, winter cress and other wild mustards, thistles (de-thorned), stinging nettles and wood nettles (cooked), burdock, bellworts, jewelweed, spiderwort, violets, carrion flower, twisted-stalk, amaranth, pine and slippery elm, among many others. Also, some wild plants with edible rhizomes (underground, horizontal stems) can be found, such as cattail, ground nut, Solomon's seal and false Solomon's seal. Wild edible tubers include arrowhead, and many more. Wild edible stems, like their domestic relatives, are usually only good when young and growing. Many of these also require preparation (as do many domestic plants, such as the potato), so it is wise to read up on the plant before experimenting with eating it.

Sources and external links

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- Institute for the Study of Edible Wild Plants & Other Foragables Link (<http://www.wildfoodadventures.com/>)

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