



TEACHING NOTES

LET'S EAT WEEDS!

A kids' guide to foraging

Authors Annie Raser-Rowland
and Adam Grubb

Illustrator Evie Barrow

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PLOT

From salads to main dishes, edible weeds are delicious! Find out how to identify them, where and when to find them, and how to cook them.

Ever thought weeds were just pesky plants to pull out and throw away? Think again! This informative, funny, and beautiful book will show you just how great edible weeds can taste. Learn to smell your way to an angled onion, bake weeds 'n' cheese pie, and safely harvest the juicy fruits of a prickly pear.

This is the ultimate companion for the young urban or rural forager. Once you've read it, you'll start to see food all around you, every time you go for a walk.

Annie Raser-Rowland and Adam Grubb's love of weeds bursts from every page. It is their sincere hope that this book ends up smeared with mud and stained with blackberry juice. Let's get foraging!

THEMES

Wild foods

eating **cooking**

adventure

nutrition

wildcrafting

resilience

**fun in
nature**



DISCUSSION TOPICS

* Close reading of the cover

Critical engagement: How many different plants are on the cover? Which ones do you recognise? Which ones can you name? Have you eaten any of these plants before?

Personal enjoyment: What's your favourite thing about this cover? (For example, the colour palette, the plants, the insects, the hand lettering, or the texture of the paper.) Why do you like that element?

* Thinking about weeds as a food source

What was your first reaction after reading the title of this book? Excitement, amusement, disgust, neutrality, curiosity, or maybe even, 'Oh, this is nothing new to me. I've been eating weeds for years!' If you think eating weeds is weird, gross, or hilarious, can you share with the class why you feel this way? If you're already familiar with eating weeds, can you share a bit about your experience — which weeds you like to eat and what you like about foraging? If you've never eaten weeds before but are excited or curious to learn more, can you share what excites you most about the idea of foraging?



ACTIVITIES

* Foraging and recording

With the assistance of your teacher or caregiver, go out and harvest one of the 'easy weeds' in this book (oxalis, dandelion, purslane, mallow, sow thistle, wild lettuce, angled onion, or fat hen). Fill out one of the weed-recording sheets available at letseatweeds.com, or make a weed-recording sheet of your own. You could even start a weed-recording journal!

* Storytelling

If you enjoy storytelling, then use your best entertainment skills to share your foraging adventure with your classmates.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Annie Raser-Rowland

is a horticulturalist and writer. She works at CERES nursery in Melbourne, giving people advice on how to grow lots of tomatoes.

Adam Grubb

runs an urban permaculture design and education business, and also co-founded EnergyBulletin.net (now [Resilience.org](https://www.resilience.org)) and the Permablitz movement.



ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Evie Barrow

is an artist and illustrator passionate about artful picture books for both kids and adults. Her hand-drawn style celebrates the textures and imperfections made by hand. When she's done sharpening pencils and untangling thread she enjoys watching Nordic Noir and Wes Anderson movies, reading and walking around the Melbourne neighbourhood where she now lives with her husband and their thirteen year old cat, Millie.



MEET ANNIE RASER-ROWLAND

This is an extract from a conversation between Anica Boulanger-Mashberg and Annie Raser-Rowland, first published in *Books+Publishing*.

At what point in your lives did you think, 'Hey, my garden isn't overgrown, it's a salad!' — and why did this happen?

Nearly 20 years ago now I moved into a share house with Adam. He'd just bought a great little book by a NSW herbalist called Pat Collins which talked about the edibility of many of the weeds that she used in her practice. Adam cooked us a superb omelette with some fat hen harvested from a feral corner of our backyard, and we were hooked.

The beautiful botanical images are a very important part of this book. What kind of working process did you go through with the illustrator, Evie Barrow, as the book developed?

The illustration process was fascinating — though Evie might use the word 'gruelling'. It was essential that each drawing be not only botanically accurate, but also evocative of the plant in its wild state. This meant layers upon layers of changes in response to our requests to make leaves 'more billowy' or a stem 'seven percent less woobly'. Shockingly, Evie both tolerated and understood such instructions, and we're over the moon with the results.

The book's second half contains a 'careful-ometer', reminding us how dangerous some weeds can be. How do you reassure people who might be anxious about making mistakes in plant identification and differentiation?

It's encouraging that with over 40,000 copies of [our foraging book for adults] *The Weed Forager's Handbook* in circulation, we're yet to have one email from a reader who has picked the wrong plant — and we get a lot of reader emails. Humans, including many children we know, seem to be inherently good at learning to tell one plant from another. Not surprising really, given the importance of this skill for the vast majority of human history. Once you know a plant, confusing it with another one is about as likely as confusing your cat with your dog.

Both books include links to online galleries showing photos of the weeds from different angles and at different stages of growth, and we encourage readers to use them. Both books also describe key identifying features that let you know you've definitely got the right plant, and the kids' book has extra descriptive detail within the text for those that take in information better that way.

What is your all-time favourite weed to eat?

Dandelion. It scratches some nutritional-craving type itch like nothing else.

