



Baja Arizona Sustainable Agriculture (BASA)

Spring Harvesting Guide

(March - May)



Cholla: The blossoms come out in the spring, late April or May. Harvest the buds right before they bloom if possible. There are lots of thorns so use tongs and be careful. Run them along a metal screen or hardware wire to help remove the many thorns. Pick the petals when they have fully opened for use in tea. Use them fresh or dry in the sun for later use. Steam them 10-15 minutes to eat soon.



Yucca Blooms: The blossoms come out in the spring, late April or May. Pick the flowers when they are open and use the petals only. Use promptly in salads or blanch for 1-2 minutes and then freeze for later use.

Tumbleweed: Also known as Russian thistle, is a nuisance when it comes to landscaping and restoration, but can be a boon when you need some greens for your salad. You might not have guessed, but these scraggly plants can serve an edible purpose too, when they are very young. As it starts to get warm, baby tumbleweeds are some of the first signs of green you will see. This is the perfect time for a harvest. When the sprouts are just popping up, until they are about 2-6 inches high, they haven't gotten their sharp points yet and are tender. You'll be surprised by how tasty they are right out of the ground. Be careful, however, because once they get a bit bigger, while they may still look tender, the ends become slightly sharp. This is not usually noticed by sight, so make sure to check the ends before you go harvesting a bunch. While the sprouts are most abundant in spring, you can find sprouts anytime between spring through the end of monsoon. Harvesting tumbleweed is not only a great way to

spruce up your salad, but is also a landscaping strategy. Removing and eating them when they're small prevents having to whack away at them when they grow big and go to seed. See [A Taste of Nature: Edible Plants of the Southwest and How to Prepare Them](#), by Kahanah Farnworth for some great recipes.

Farnsworth, K. (1997). *A taste of nature: Edible plants of the Southwest and how to prepare them*. Santa Fe, NM: Ancient City Press.



Harvest desert foods carefully; edible plants can look similar to non-edible, consult an identification guidebook, an expert, or attend a class in the field to be sure to harvest safely. Taste and wait 30 minutes for any adverse reaction. BASA assumes no liability for harvesting complications. Be safe and careful in sampling new foods.

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