

# Those imported edibles

BY BRIAN DALZELL

A lot of naturalists on Prince Edward Island are probably aware of the fact that some of our birdlife has been imported from Europe. What some of them may not know is that a good number of our plants originated there as well.

While the House Sparrow, European Starling and Rock Dove were purposely brought here in the late 1800's by well-meaning folk, numerous alien plants found their own way here. Most of them came in ships, mixed in with ballast or cargoes of grain.

They found North America quite to their liking and once ashore they spread profusely, often to the detriment of native species of plants and flowers. For the most part, these aliens took to roadsides, waste places and cities that the native flora could not fully adapt to.

Once here, the settlers of the time took full advantage of them. They were looked on as a welcome addition to the sometimes sparse diet of those struggling to make a living off the land.

This is certainly not the case today, where the vast majority of us simply make a quick trip to the local supermarket once or twice a week to fill our shopping carts with food. The weeds are still here though, and free for the taking.

One of the most common city weeds is the Common Plantain. It seems to thrive on adversity and many lawn owners will attest to its tenacity when faced with a barrage of modern weed-killing chemicals such as 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T.

What most of them probably don't know, and what a cow would likely tell you if it could talk, is that they make an excellent green salad. As a matter of fact, the greener they are the more vitamin A and C they hold.

They can be cooked as a vegetable by first taking the tender young leaves, plucking and stripping the bad parts off and washing them in salt water for four to five minutes. Use sugar instead of salt when cooking them and drink the leftover fluid, or use it as a base for sauce or gravy, as most of the minerals are contained in the water.

A nice salad can also be made by cutting the cleaned leaves into small pieces and mixing them with other fresh vegetables. Eat them raw and pour some maple syrup over them to sweeten them.

Evening Primrose is another weed familiar to most people because of the way the flowers open at dusk. The yellow flowers attract night-flying moths upon which they depend for fertilization. The sweet and nutritious roots made it one of the earliest edible plants that was brought over from Europe as a food, long before the Pilgrims set foot on Plymouth Rock.

The big, branching roots are good only in the first year. They can easily be identified because the stems with the flower spikes don't ap-



EVENING PRIMROSE