

THE OLD HOLLER WAYS

VOLUME I

Mountain Remedies & Foraging

*The pantry-and-garden traditions the
holler folk leaned on — kept before they were lost.*

FREE FIELD SAMPLE · CHAPTER ONE, WHOLE

compiled by Silas Mullins · from a lifetime in the Blue Ridge

A WORD BEFORE YOU BEGIN

What you're holding

This is the first chapter of Volume I, given to you whole — not a teaser, a real piece of the book.

Up in the holler, you didn't run to the store every time you needed something. You *knew things*. You knew which plants on the hillside were food, which ones the old folks reached for, and which to step around. That knowing wasn't written down — it was passed across the kitchen table, and as the old people passed on, most of it went with them.

I spent years setting down what my people knew before it was gone for good. This little sample is the honest front porch of that work: read it, try a thing or two, and you'll know whether the full set belongs on your shelf.

I've kept it plain enough for anybody to use, and I've kept it *true*. Where the old folks used a plant for comfort, I'll tell you so — as **tradition**, the way it was done, not as a cure.

Read this part, please. Everything here is shared as **folk tradition and food**, for your interest — **not medical advice**. Plants are not medicine in these pages. Never eat or use a wild plant unless you are **100% certain** of what it is; when in doubt, leave it be. If you're pregnant, on medication, or caring for a child, talk to a real doctor before trying anything new.

That's the whole bargain. Now — let's walk out to the yard.

What's inside the whole book

Twelve chapters. This sample hands you the first one, complete — so you can judge the rest by it.

1. The First Three Plants Every Holler Child Could Name **IN THIS SAMPLE**
2. The Yard Pharmacy: nine common weeds and the old uses for them **FULL BOOK**
3. Spring Greens: the wild salad bowl, March to May **FULL BOOK**
4. Roots, Barks & Berries: the autumn forage **FULL BOOK**
5. The Comfort Teas of the Blue Ridge **FULL BOOK**
6. The Holler Cupboard: salves, syrups & how Granny kept them **FULL BOOK**
7. Drying & Putting By: keeping the harvest a year **FULL BOOK**
8. The Look-Alikes: nine plants to never confuse **FULL BOOK**
9. A Forager's Calendar for the Mountains **FULL BOOK**
10. Old Recipes from Foraged Things **FULL BOOK**
11. Teaching the Young'uns: passing it on **FULL BOOK**
12. The Rules of the Woods: take little, leave plenty **FULL BOOK**

CHAPTER ONE

The First Three Plants Every Holler Child Could Name

Before a mountain child could read, they could point to these three. They grow in nearly every yard in America — most folks just call them weeds and mow them down.

I want to start you where my grandmother started me: not on the far ridge, but in the dooryard. The three plants in this chapter grow in lawns, along paths, at the edge of the garden — humble, free, and everywhere. Learn these three cold, and you'll never again look at a patch of grass the same way.

For each one I'll give you the same four things, plain: *how to know it, where it grows, how the old folks used it, and a caution.* Learn the knowing first. The using comes after, and only when you're sure.

*"Take little, leave plenty, and never eat
a thing you can't name twice."*

Let's begin with the one that grows in the crack of every sidewalk in the country.

PLANT ONE

Broadleaf Plantain

Plantago major — the "bandage leaf" of the dooryard

HOW TO KNOW IT

A low rosette of broad, oval leaves that lie close to the ground, each with *strong parallel ribs* running stem to tip — pull a leaf slow and the ribs string out like little threads. From the center rises a slim green seed-spike, like a tiny cattail. It is not tall, not showy. It is the plant in the path that everyone steps on and nobody names.

WHERE IT GROWS

Footpaths, driveways, lawns, the hard-packed edge of the garden — it favors trodden ground, which is why the old folks called it "white man's footstep." If you have a yard, you almost certainly have plantain.

HOW THE OLD FOLKS USED IT

Two ways. As *food*: the youngest, smallest leaves were cooked like any spring green — older leaves turn stringy, so take them small. As *tradition*: a fresh leaf, crushed soft and laid on a bug bite or a scrape, was the holler child's first "dooryard bandage." That's how it was done for generations — I pass it on as the custom it was, not as a treatment.

Caution. Harvest only from ground you know is **unsprayed** and away from roadsides (plants drink what's in the soil). Positive-identify before you pick. The folk poultice above is shared as **tradition only** — for any real wound, see a doctor.

PLANT TWO

Common Blue Violet

Viola sororia — the sweetheart of the spring yard

HOW TO KNOW IT

Heart-shaped leaves on their own little stems, low to the ground, and in spring those unmistakable five-petal violet-blue flowers nodding on slender stalks. Both the leaf and the flower rise straight from the ground, not from a branching stem — that's your tell.

WHERE IT GROWS

Damp, half-shady spots: lawn edges, under trees, along the north side of the house, the cool margin of the garden. Where the grass stays a little soft and green, look down — the violets are there.

HOW THE OLD FOLKS USED IT

This one is pure pleasure. The young heart-leaves and the flowers are both edible — tossed raw into a spring salad, or the flowers boiled down into the prettiest jelly you ever saw (the recipe is two pages on). Children candied the blossoms with a little sugar. It was the yard's small luxury, free for the gathering.

Caution. Eat only true *Viola* violets — the wild blue-flowered kind described here. The houseplant called "**African violet**" is a different plant entirely and is not for eating. As always: unsprayed ground, and certain identification first.

PLANT THREE

Dandelion

Taraxacum officinale — the whole-plant pantry

HOW TO KNOW IT

A flat rosette of jagged, tooth-edged leaves (the French called it *dent de lion*, lion's tooth). One smooth, *hollow* stem per flower — and that's important — each carrying a single golden bloom that becomes the puffball every child has blown. Snap a leaf or stem and you'll see *milky white sap*. No branching, one flower to a stem: that's true dandelion.

WHERE IT GROWS

Everywhere the sun hits open ground — lawns, fields, fence lines, the garden you've been weeding all your life. The most common, most useful "weed" in America.

HOW THE OLD FOLKS USED IT

Nothing on the dandelion is wasted. The *young leaves*, picked before the plant flowers, are the least bitter — the classic mountain spring green (next page). The *golden flowers* were battered and fried, or set to make a country wine. The *roots* were dug in fall, roasted dark, and ground into a coffee-like brew for when real coffee was dear.

Caution. Take greens young, from **unsprayed** lawns (most lawn chemicals target this very plant). A harmless look-alike, cat's-ear, has hairy leaves and a branching, solid stem — true dandelion is smooth, hollow, one bloom per stem. When unsure, don't.

Two things to make this week

Knowing a plant is half of it. Here's the other half — what we actually did with it.

Wilted Dandelion Greens with Hot Bacon Dressing

A Blue Ridge spring supper · serves 2–3 · about 20 minutes

You'll need:

- 4 big handfuls young dandelion greens (picked before the plant flowers), washed well
- 4 slices bacon, cut crosswise into small pieces
- 3 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sugar (or honey)
- ½ small onion, sliced thin · salt & black pepper

How:

1. Cook the bacon in a skillet over medium heat until crisp. Lift it out, leave the drippings.
2. Soften the onion in the drippings a minute, then stir in the vinegar and sugar; let it bubble 30 seconds.
3. Pile the greens in a bowl, pour the hot dressing over, and toss — they'll wilt down soft.
4. Scatter the bacon back on top, salt and pepper to taste. Eat warm. The heat tames the bitter.

Granny's Blue Violet Jelly

A windowsill jewel · makes ~4 small jars · steep overnight

You'll need:

- 2 cups fresh blue violet flowers (just the blossoms, no stems), lightly packed
- 2 cups boiling water · juice of 1 lemon
- 4 cups sugar · 1 packet (3 oz) liquid pectin

How:

1. Put the blossoms in a jar, pour the boiling water over, cover, and let it steep overnight. You'll wake to a deep blue-grey infusion.
2. Strain out the flowers. Stir in the lemon juice — and watch it turn a bright amethyst pink before your eyes.
3. Bring the liquid and sugar to a hard boil, stir in the pectin, boil one minute more.
4. Pour into clean jars and seal. A spoonful on a biscuit tastes like spring itself.

And that's chapter one — three plants you can find before you finish your coffee tomorrow, and two ways to put them on the table. Learn these, and you've already got more of the old knowing than most folks will hold in a lifetime.

The rest of Volume I carries it further: nine more dooryard plants, the comfort teas, how Granny kept her salves and syrups through the year, and the look-alikes you must never confuse. Then there are the two volumes that stand beside it.

IF THE FRONT PORCH SUITED YOU

Come on inside

This sample was the first chapter of one book. The full Old Holler Ways is three field guides — everything my people knew about staying warm, fed, and well without depending on anybody.

Volume I — Mountain Remedies & Foraging

The dooryard plants, the comfort teas, putting by the harvest. (You just read its first chapter.)

Volume II — The No-Power Pantry

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THE HONEST FINE PRINT

Please read this

This is folk tradition and food — not medical advice.

Everything in The Old Holler Ways is shared for your interest and enjoyment as documented folk custom, cookery, and self-reliance. The plants described are presented as **food and as historical tradition**. Nothing here is a treatment, a cure, or a substitute for professional medical care. No statement has been evaluated by any health authority.

Forge at your own care.

Never eat or apply any wild plant unless you have identified it with complete certainty, gathered it from clean, unsprayed ground away from roads, and confirmed it is safe for you. Plants can be mistaken for harmful look-alikes. If you are pregnant or nursing, taking medication, managing a health condition, or gathering for children, consult a qualified doctor first. The author accepts no liability for how this information is used.

About this sample.

This is a free promotional sample containing Chapter One of Volume I, shared whole. The complete three-volume set is available at theoldhollerways.com.

The Old Holler Ways · Volume I: Mountain Remedies & Foraging · Field Sample.

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