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## Milkweeds

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Wild food resources are not restricted to the arable parts of the world, however, many grow well in adverse climates and their success in such situations is well known. For example, mesquite and the seed from the cardon cactus thrive in desert areas where they continue to be used as foods by natives. Other plants, although aquatic, are nevertheless edible, and they are even considered a curse because they block irrigation canals and waterways.

Western man's ethnocentricity and his failure to look back in history is compounding our present problems because not only are we failing to recognize potential food sources, but we are also failing to learn from our past mistakes in agriculture. Re-education is needed and surely a start would be gaining the interest of school children in the food resources of the fields, forests, hedgerows, and even vacant housing lots from Alaska to New Mexico.

### References

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### The Plant Kingdom: A New Energy Source

Besides being an energy source for themselves, plants are the ultimate energy source for all other forms of life. In addition, plants have also served as an energy source in fossil fuels such as coal. The NSF has recently approved a \$250,000 grant to study photosynthesis as a possible alternative energy source. Hydrogen and oxygen, produced by green plants utilizing solar energy, might possibly be used as a fuel by recombining the elements in a fuel cell, thereby generating electrical power via the heat released. The grant was made to Dr. Anthony San Pietrom, Chairman of the Plant Sciences at Indiana University.

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### Milkweeds

Recent studies indicate that seedlings of some plants, when subjected to aqueous extracts of milkweed leaves, have their growth inhibited. Is this true of all seedlings or just some species of seedlings? What is the agent involved? Could proper concentrations of it regulate the growth rate of lawns?

Reference: Rasmussen, J. A. and F. A. Einhellig. 1975. Noncompetitive effects of common milkweed, *Asclepias syriaca* L., on germination and growth of grain sorghum. *American Midland Naturalist* 94(2): 478-483.