



Baja Arizona Sustainable Agriculture (BASA)

Summer Harvesting Guide

June-August



Mesquite Pods:

Pick in an area away from highways, toxins, pollution, construction areas. Taste the pods before you pick them, avoid chalky, bitter or burning flavor.

Pick from the tree, not the ground (dirt, rodents, and bird droppings). They should pull off the tree easily. Pods should be dry, brittle and snap easily. Shiny pods may taste good but are not dry enough for milling and can be used for other purposes.

Spread pods out on a tray or screen to check for leaves, twigs, rocks and other tree debris. Remove these before roasting or storing.

To avoid bruchid beetles, dry in oven at 200 degrees for 1 hour or in a Solar Oven at low temps, <300 degrees for 30-40 minutes. If pods burn they are still usable but the flour will be darker and taste different.

Store them in a clean dry food safe container until milling time. Close lid tightly as the pods will absorb moisture in the air if humidity is present.

Prickly Pear Fruits



Prickly pear fruits ripen from late July through October, depending on the variety. Wear leather gloves, take long handled tongs and a large clean bucket. The fruits should pull easily from the pads and leave a small red area on the pad. If not ripe and sweet, come back in a couple weeks when the fruits are ripe. Check carefully for snakes and rodents and watch your step as stickers and thorns are painful. Do not pick all of the fruits, leave some for the birds and other critters. If you see fruit on private property, ask the owners for permission to harvest the fruits.

When you get your bucket of fruits home rinse with a spray of water and let them drain. You can freeze the fruits in freezer safe containers or place them directly into a large pot with water to cook into jelly, syrup or juice (20 -30 minutes) or store in a cool area for a week or two. If you have a gas stove or grill going, you can singe them to remove the large spines and small thorn glochids. You can also scrape them with a knife but hold them carefully with tongs.

When fruits are soft, from defrosting them from the freezer or cooking, mash them or blend in a blender or food processor. Strain through a fine sieve or press through a clean pillowcase. Follow recipes to make jelly, syrup, wine or refrigerate or freeze for juice.



Juniper- late summer- fall

The juniper berry starts out green, and ripens to red or bluish brown. Pick by hand when they start turning brown. Taste can vary greatly from sweet to resinous. Use fresh or dry and place in sealed containers. Juniper berries are a valuable spice to add to marinades, dressings and fermenting. Some are just good to eat and have many medicinal uses.



Palo Verde Pods

Pick the Palo verde pods from the tree or ground. Open the pods and place the beans in a clean dry container. Blanch and eat soon or use in your favorite recipes. Mature beans can be roasted and ground into flour.



Desert Willow Blooms

The Desert Willow may bloom all summer, so pick the sweet and fragrant flowers and use fresh within 24 hours for flavorful teas.



Pigweed- Amaranth species

A leafy green vegetable that often shows up uninvited in gardens or along washes after good rains. Pick the leaves when young and tender and eat fresh in salads or sautéed lightly as a green. The flowers will seed and can be harvested easier when dry. Gather and rub them to remove extra plant material. Seeds can be ground into meal and are very nutritious

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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