

A CULINARY USE FOR THE LEAF OF  
VITIS RIPARIA

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HAPPILY, when the old-folks shook off the dust of centuries of subjugation and oppression to come to the New World, they still retained a taste for certain dishes of prepared foods, one of which entails the use of the leaf of *Vitis*. And fortunately, the leaf of *Vitis riparia* Michx. was soon found to be particularly suited for this purpose. The leaves, gathered in June at maximum size and still tender, are rolled around a mixture of ground meat and rice into cigar-like shapes with ends tucked in. The resulting cooked product, *rolled grapeleaves*, forms a deliciously tart main course with or without the application of lemon-juice.

As no mention of this use of the wild grapeleaf is found in that remarkably complete work on *Edible Wild Plants of Eastern North America* by Fernald and Kinsey, it occurred to the writer that this is worthy of a note in RHODORA. And of course the recipe of a little-known highly favored dish is hereby passed on to the readers of RHODORA and botanical friends.

The leaves are gathered fresh, and are made ready by snapping off the petioles right at the blade. For the filling use one pound of minced meat, lamb or beef, with a little suet, to one cupful of (long) rice; mix in a bowl, and salt and pepper to taste. Place about a tablespoonful of the filling in the center of the leaf, give it a roughly cylindrical shape, then fold leaf-edges over the cylinder-ends and roll loosely from the leaf-base towards the leaf-apex. Stack these rolled grapeleaves in a pot, add cold water to two-thirds of their depth, and boil gently for one hour. A plate should be placed under the rolled grapeleaves to prevent burning, if thick-walled utensils, "Wear-ever", are not at hand.

My father, who claims to have been at six years of age a cook's helper, washing dishes and setting the table for 40 Italian railroad workers on the Beirut to Damascus line, says, "people like to eat a dish like this, but they just will not cook it". But, considering the gusto with which botanists in the past have tackled strange dishes, I have no fear that this recipe will go untried.

Incidentally, if the leaves are gathered later in the season, they are rather tough. But they can be salted away in a jar with a



liberal amount of ordinary table-salt on each leaf. Placed in a cool spot in the cellar, they keep through the winter. The salting tenderizes the leaves. To use the salted leaves, wash each leaf and soak over night. The leaves also keep dried.

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THE EIGHTH EDITION OF GRAY'S MANUAL OF BOTANY.<sup>1</sup>—Amateur and professional botanists alike have eagerly looked forward to this new edition of Gray's Manual. Forty-two years is a long time in the light of the rapid strides which all branches of botanical science have made in recent years and when botanists realized that the new edition was really on the way, it seemed that it would never actually materialize. Now that the book is before them, their long period of waiting has been richly rewarded. It might be said that this volume is more than a revision, so much that is new has been incorporated into it. In looking it over, it is borne in upon one what a prodigious amount of research was involved. This eighth edition comes off the press just two years over the hundredth anniversary of the original edition by Prof. Gray in 1848.

To this edition Prof. Fernald has given the fruits of a lifetime of study, not only in the herbarium but to a greater extent than can be said of any of the previous authors, of intensive work in the field. He has added considerably to the area covered by the seventh edition by including the Gaspé Peninsula and Newfoundland, in fact all the region south of the Straits of Belle Isle. Since the last edition there has been much careful and intensive field-work in all parts of the manual range. More than any other such manual this book represents an intimate knowledge of the plants in the field. Especially is this true of the author's own field-work. Such accurate understanding of the live plants is reflected in the writing of the descriptions in the text.

There are certain specifications which the botanist who uses such a manual has a right to expect. Two such criteria seem to be of prime importance. First the text should show the highest degree of accuracy. How well the Manual shows this, only those who have followed the author's painstaking work through the years can fully realize. The second criterion is that the Manual should be usable for both professional and amateur botanists. In looking over the book various devices to facilitate its use are at once apparent. The practice of italicizing the most distinctive characteristics has been followed as in the seventh edition. The use of various kinds of type to make the text clearer is also followed. Under the genera several categories have been used for grouping as for example subgenera, sections and series. By this means the more conservative treatment of the genera has been possible while at the same time indicating worth-while distinctions. Many of the illustrations of the older book have been retained and in addition many more figures have been used here for the first time. These are of much help in emphasizing critical structures. The glossary again appears, much expanded and in larger type to make its use easier. At first the appearance of two indices, one to Latin and the other to colloquial names, is a surprise, as in the seventh edition they had been merged in one master-index. Again this innovation may be an advantage. From the standpoint of the beginner, the absence of unfamiliar Latin terms in with the English names will probably render the book more

<sup>1</sup> MERRITT LYNDON FERNALD—*Gray's Manual of Botany*, Eighth (Centennial) Edition—Illustrated. A Handbook of the Flowering Plants and Ferns of the Central and Northeastern United States and Adjacent Canada. LXIV + 1632 pp. New York—American Book Company 1950. \$9.50.



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