Nutritional Properties of Native Plants and Traditional Foods from the Central United States

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Abstract Traditional foods of indigenous people are a potential untapped source for providing nutritious dietary in the modern world. The rising popularity of indigenous foods such as amaranth in recent years suggests that the can become a popular part of a healthy diet in the United States. Traditional knowledge of indigenous people can basis for using wild food resources. This research provides data on 50 plant species common to the central United that are abundant sources of dietary protein and fiber, and used traditionally by Native American tribes. Many spec promise with high amounts of protein and fiber being found in lamb’s quarters, nettles, grass seeds, and buffalo. These results honor traditional knowledge. In addition, many of these species could be cultivated using technique similar to those existing for commercial grains and vegetables. Seeds and/or greens of these wild plants could be incorporated into the diets of many more people, improving modern diets, and the nutritional quality of food produ

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Introduction
Many food sources utilized in the past by Native American people are no longer consumed, despite their potential to provide high amounts of many nutrients that could benefit human health. Archaeological evidence indicates seeds of native lambsquarters (Chenopodium berlandieri) and marsh elder (Iva annua) were once cultivated as a part of the Eastern Agricultural Complex and used extensively in the Midwest and Great Plains, but these are no longer used as food (Asch and Asch 1977; Black 1963; Gremlion 2004; Kindscher 1987). Other foods, such as “greens” from Chenopodium, Amaranthus, and even common milkweed (Asclepias syriaca) are not consumed as much as they were decades ago by improve the nutritional quality of modern diet recognizing the value of traditional knowledge practices by encouraging use of these wild foods today.

By “traditionally” used foods, we mean that were eaten for centuries prior to the European colonization (Sanchez 2007). Americans relied on wild plant foods for prior to the development of the Eastern Agricultural Complex around 1800 BCE and cultivated crops, lambsquarters and marsh elder, as sunflowers, squash, little barley, and erect k