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## **Pokeweed** *(Phytolacca americana)*



From [THE WILD VEGETARIAN COOKBOOK](#)



**Pokeweed Shoot**

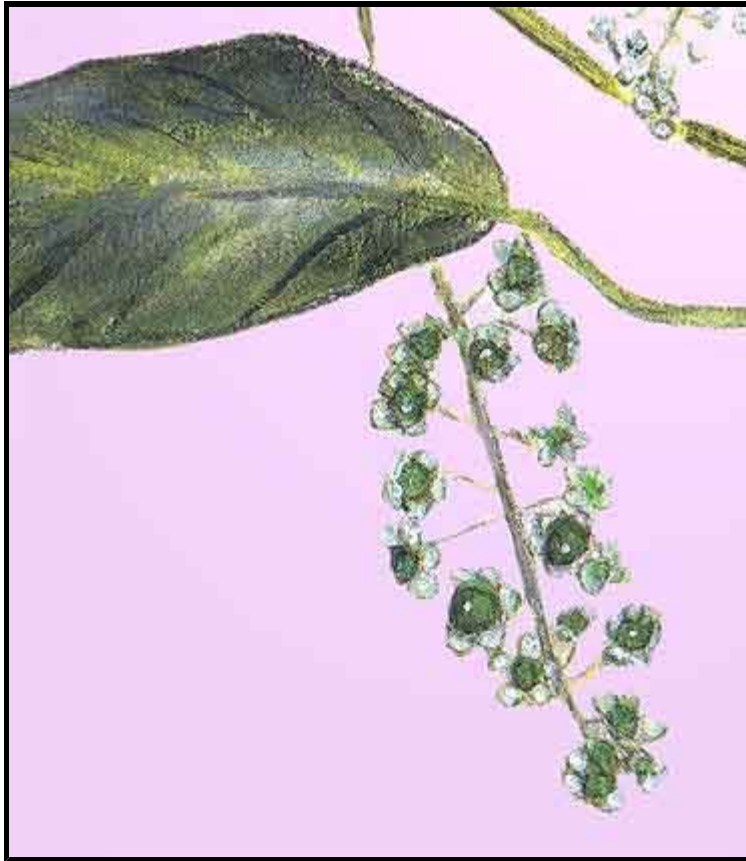
This reddish-stained non-woody plant grows from 4-8 feet tall and branches,

like a tree, then dies to the ground, all in one season. Its oval, stalked, alternate, smooth-edged emerald green leaves get 8-10 inches long.



### **Pokeweed Shoot**

Small, five-petaled, short-stalked, radially-symmetrical flowers with green centers bloom in the summer and fall.

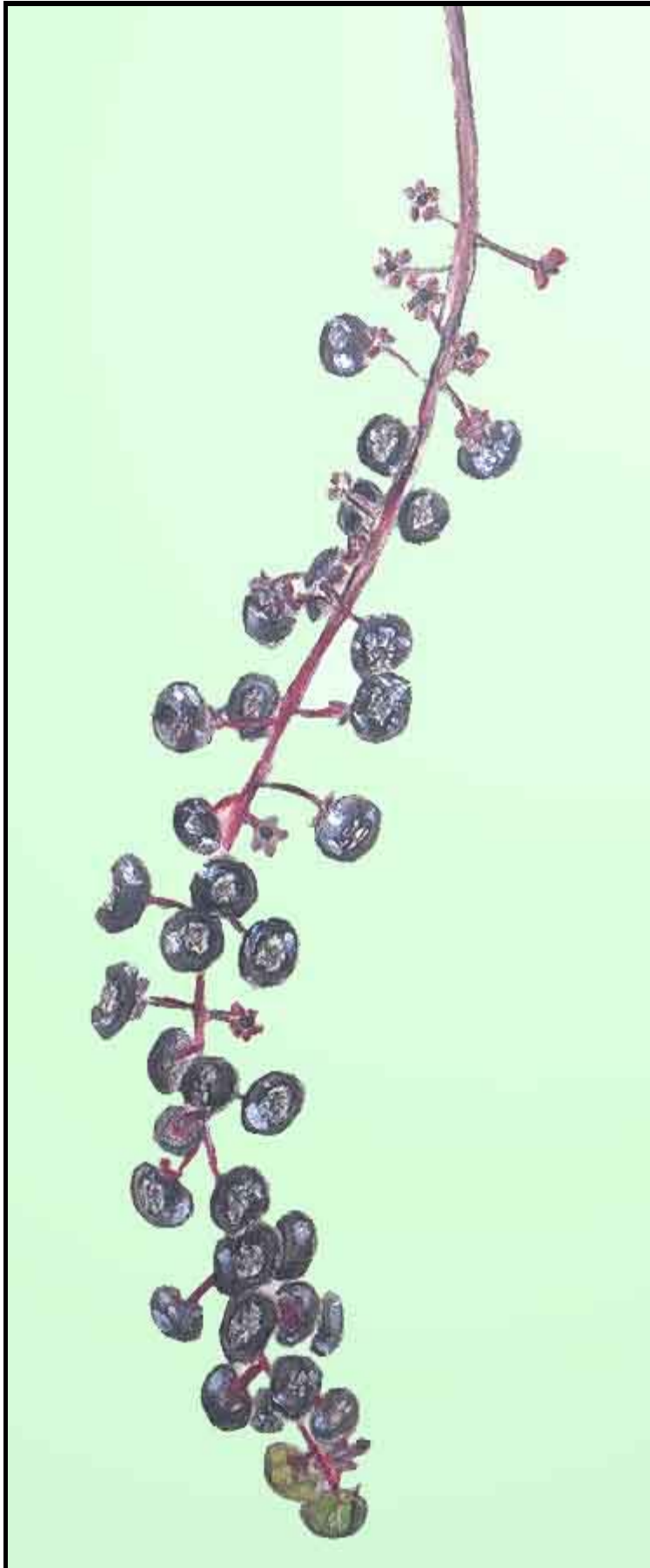
**Pokeweed Flowers**

They dangle from long racemes (common stalks).

**Pokeweed Flowers on Raceme**

Notice how the flower centers (ovaries), already resemble the berries they will become.

They're replaced by purple-black berries 1/3 inch across in the fall.





**Pokeweed Berries**

Each berry is marked with an indentation, as though someone had poked it.

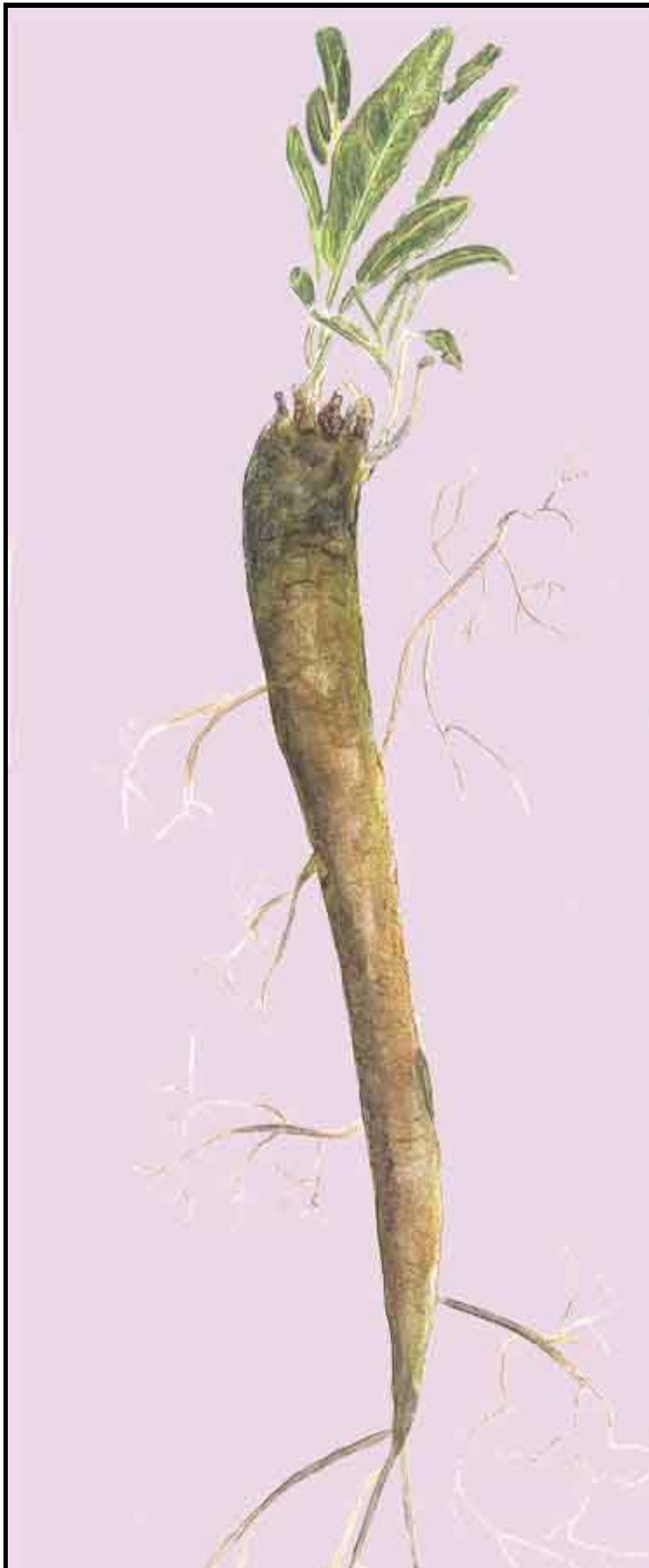
**Pokeweed Berries**

Inside the berries are numerous small, flat, highly-toxic seeds.

**Poke Seeds**

Note the purple dye from the opened berries.

Underground is a huge, fleshy, toxic, perennial taproot.





### **Pokeweed Taproot and Very Young Shoot**

This is one of the best-tasting vegetables on the planet. Gourmet stores in Europe (where it's grown as a crop) and supermarkets in the south (where it's been popular since the days of the pioneers) sell it canned.

Make sure you collect only the young stems and leaves in the spring, never the roots, flowers, berries, or summer or fall plants, which are poisonous. Avoid plants more than 8 inches tall. Prepare as directed below, or you may get very sick. Beginners should use this dangerous gourmet vegetable only under expert supervision.

### **[Pokeweed Recipes](#)**

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