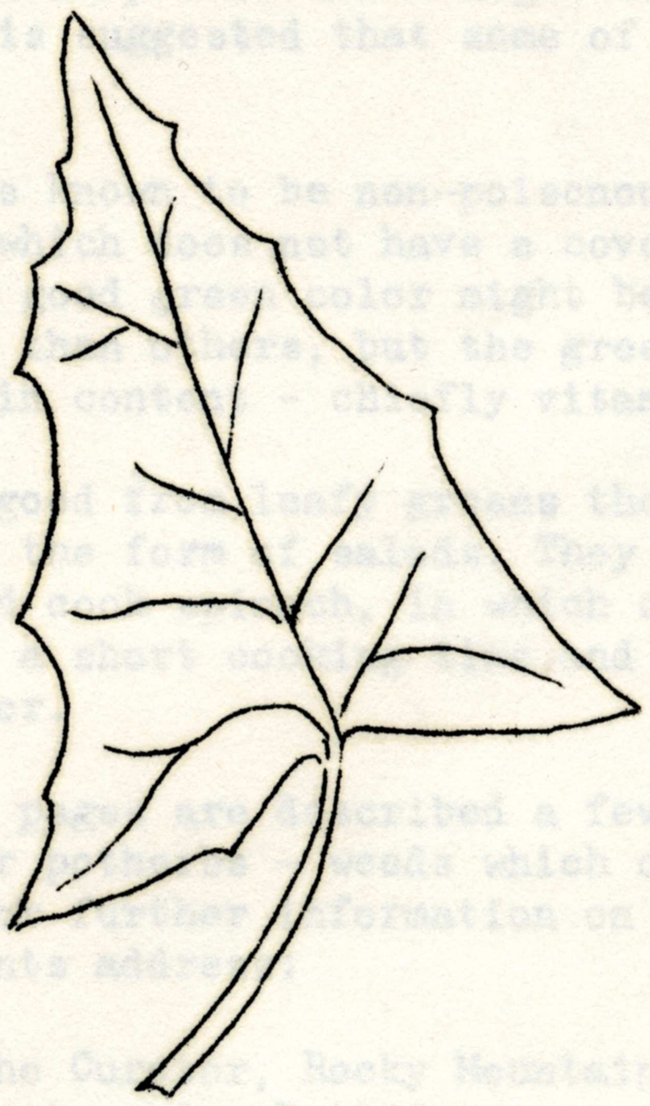
FOOD FROM WEEDS

C. L. PORTER



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F O O D f r o m W E E D S

It has long been the practice in European and Asiatic countries to make use of common weeds for potherbs and salad greens. And since many of our Wyoming weeds are the same species as occur in the Old World, there is some use made of them in this region. In addition to the well-known species, however, there are numerous other species which might well be suitable for table use and it is suggested that some of these be given a trial.

Any herb which is known to be non-poisonous, which is not tough nor woody, which does not have a covering of hair, and which possesses a good green color might be tried. Some may be more palatable than others, but the green color indicates an abundance of vitamin content - chiefly vitamin A.

To get the most good from leafy greens they should be eaten raw, such as in the form of salads. They may, of course, be boiled as one would cook spinach, in which case the vitamins are preserved best by a short cooking time and the use of only a small amount of water.

On the following pages are described a few of the recommended weeds suitable for potherbs - weeds which occur in most parts of the State. For further information on the identification of native Wyoming plants address:

The Curator, Rocky Mountain Herbarium,
Engineering Building,
University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyo.

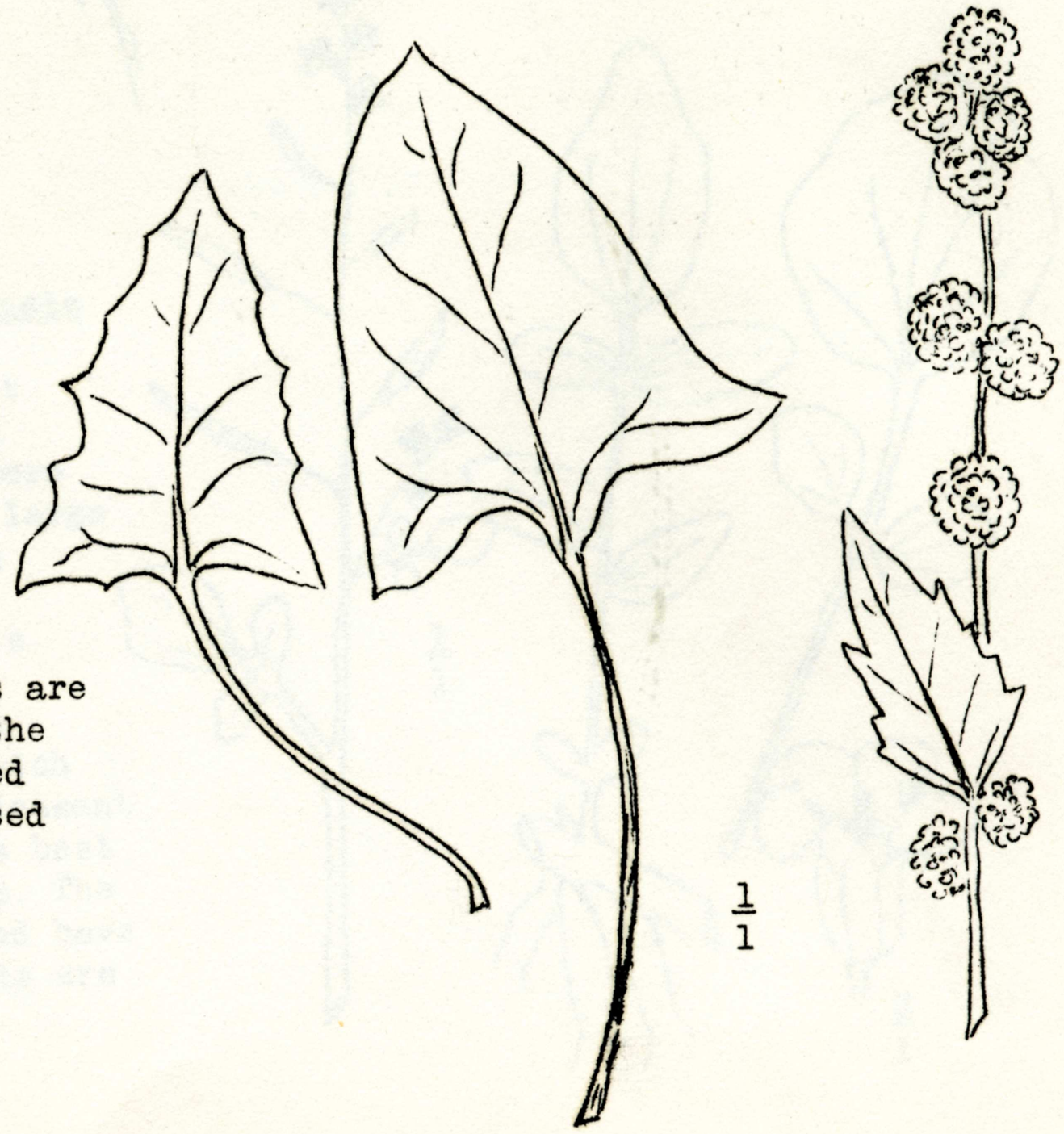
GOOSEFOOT or LAMB'S QUARTERS
Chenopodium album

This species, together with several others which are much like it in general appearance, is sometimes called "wild spinach" and has long been used for greens in Europe. The leaves are usually whitish-mealy beneath and the flowers are greenish, in tight clusters. It is a common weed in gardens and fields, preferring cultivated ground.

1/1

STRAWBERRY BLITE
Blitum capitatum

A fairly common weed of moist places which is easily recognized by the bright pink clusters of fleshy fruits which develop soon after the greenish flowers. It is not mealy, but the leaves are a clear green color and the stems are usually streaked with red. This is also used like spinach in Europe.



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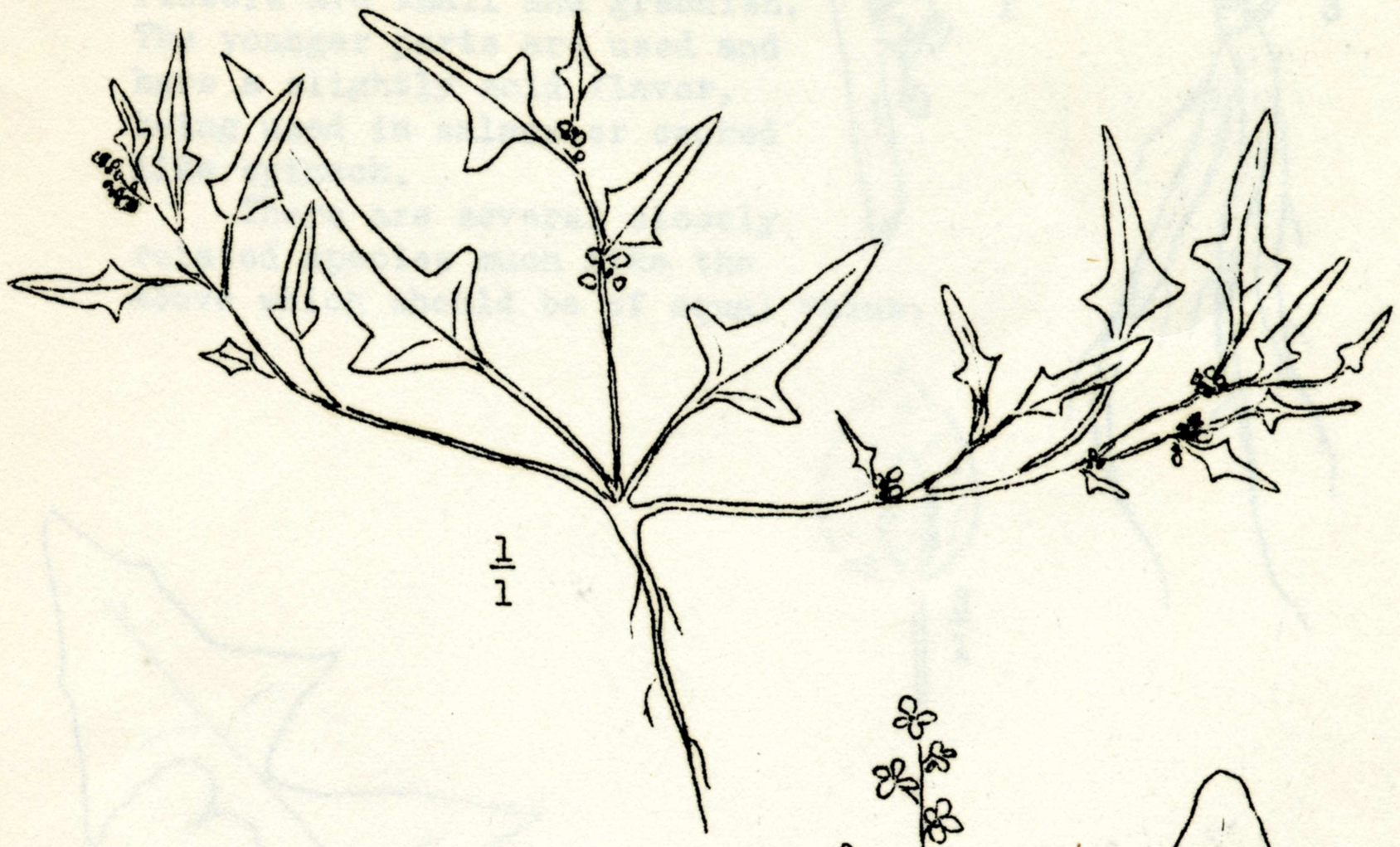
MONOLEPIS

Monolepis Nuttalliana

This is a common weed especially in alkali areas where it often spreads over disturbed soil and into lawns. It has a semi-prostrate habit, the branches tending to lie close to the ground. The flowers are small and greenish and the leaves are readily recognized by their arrow-head shape with two prominent basal lobes. This species has not been used as extensively as the Goosefoot or Strawberry Blite, but it should be equally good.



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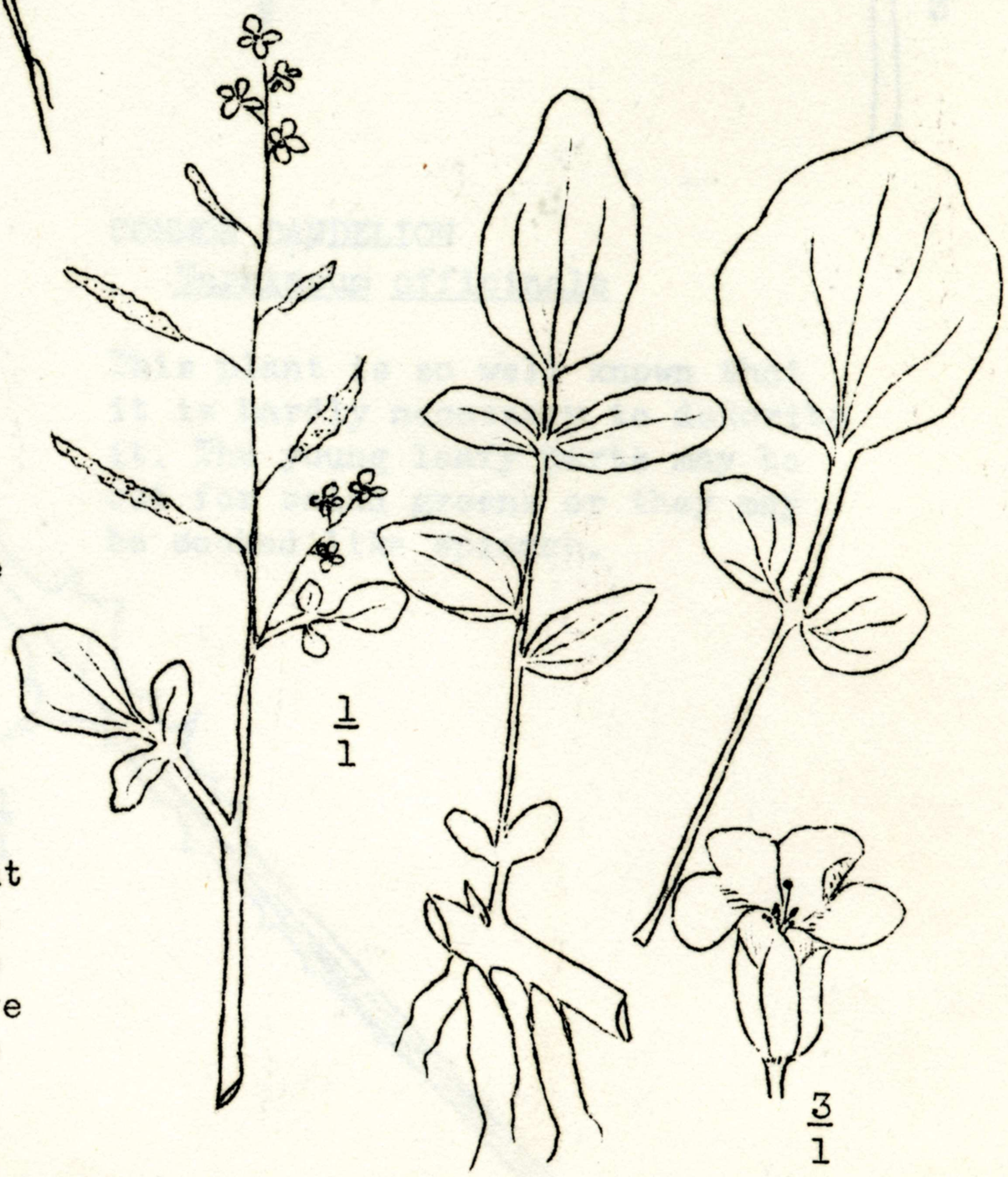
WATER CRESS

Nasturtium officinale

This well-known plant is commonly found in pools and streams where it frequently forms large masses of dark green vegetation, rooting from the stems. It is an excellent salad material and makes a very palatable sandwich filling. It has a pleasant peppery taste and is best when fresh and crisp. The flowers are white and have four petals. The pods are about one inch long.



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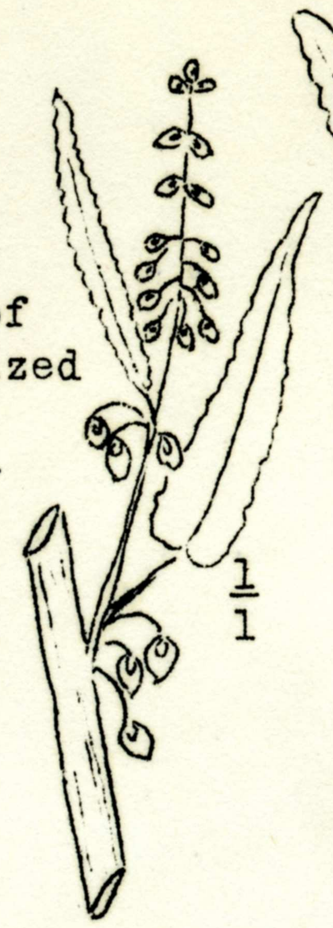
3/1

CURLY DOCK

Rumex crispus

This is a perennial which is to be found in meadows and moist pastures or along roadsides where it gets sufficient moisture. It attains a height of 2-3 feet and is readily recognized by the curly, crisped leaf-margins and by the small grain-like fruits which are surrounded by a thin, wing. The flowers are small and greenish. The younger parts are used and have a slightly acid flavor, being used in salads or cooked like spinach.

There are several closely related species much like the above which should be of equal value.



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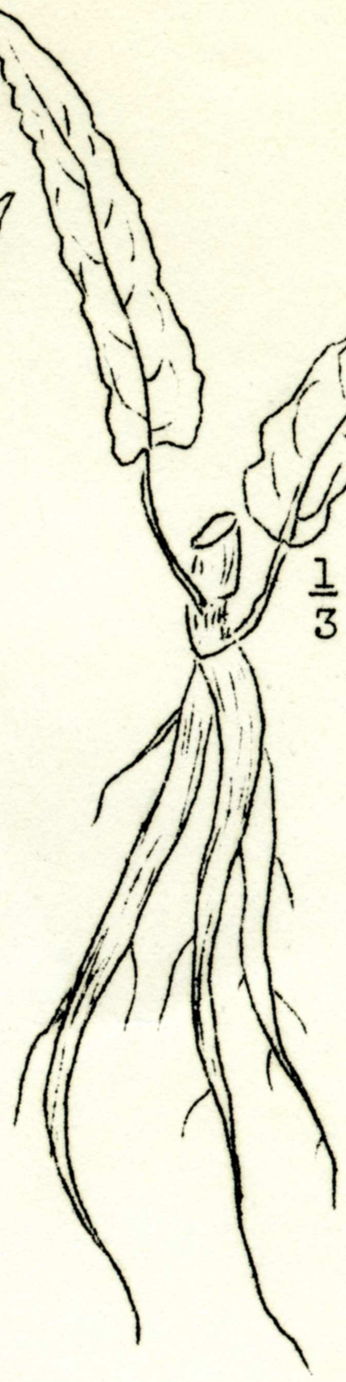

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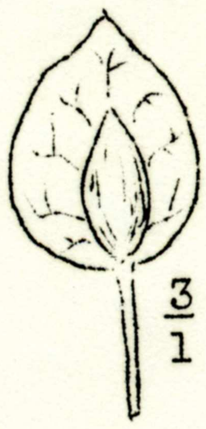

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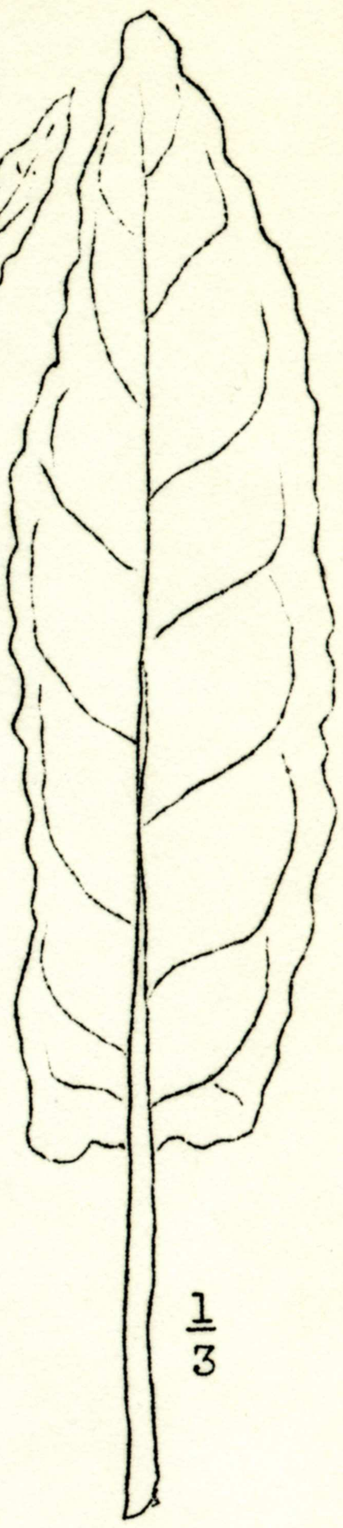

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COMMON DANDELION

Taraxacum officinale

This plant is so well known that it is hardly necessary to describe it. The young leafy parts may be cut for salad greens or they may be cooked like spinach.

3/1

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