



# Fireweed

*Epilobium angustifolium*

Fireweed, from the evening primrose family (onagraceae), is also called willow herb and blooming sally and is named for the striking blooms on tall stalks. Fireweed is probably the best known wildflower in Alaska. Patches of fireweed can be seen growing throughout Alaska's more temperate regions.

In mid to late summer, fireweed begins blooming in the middle of the stalk with each successive flower blooming just above the one before it. As the last flowers are blooming at the top of the stalk, the earliest blooms seed and turn to cotton. When the fireweed turns to cotton, Alaskans say there are about six weeks before winter begins.

## Food Use:

The reddish asparagus-like stalks of spring fireweed are high in vitamins A and C. They are edible raw or cooked. Spring shoots range from mild to quite bitter. Shoots can be simmered in stews or prepared like asparagus and tossed into a green salad.

A fireweed decoction, made by boiling the whole herb, has been used for relieving whooping cough and asthma.

*Caution: Fireweed tea can have a laxative effect. Drink in moderation unless you are specifically seeking this effect.*

Source:

*Discovering Wild Plants: Alaska, Western Canada, The North West.* By Janice J. Schofield

*Benteh Nuutah*

Valley Native Primary Care Center  
Wellness Center

(907) 631-7630 | southcentralfoundation.com

