

Goose tongues — Weguat

WEGUAT QUTMI NAUT. – GOOSE TONGUES ARE GROWING ON THE BEACH.



Photo: Goose tongue growing in a coastal meadow.

Goose tongue (*Plantago maritima*) is a low-lying plantain, an herb that grows in coastal wetlands on beaches, cliffs, and marshes across southern Alaska. This plant resembles a clump of grass. It has long, narrow, pointed leaves that grow in bunches from its base. These leaves are thick and succulent and a favorite food of bears. From its base, the plant also produces small stems of yellow or greenish flowers that grow up to eight inches tall.

On Kodiak, goose tongue is a widely harvested spring vegetable. The leaves have a mild salty flavor. People collect its tender young leaves from May until the plant flowers in late July. By midsummer, the plant matures and the leaves become bitter and fibrous. Alutiiq people eat goose tongue raw, steamed, or boiled. One local recipe suggests mixing crisp bacon and sautéed onions with four cups of steamed goose-tongue leaves to create a flavorful side dish. Other recipes include goose tongue in fritters or as a salad ingredient tossed with other spring greens.