Papalo

Botanical name: Porophyllium ruderale (part of daisy family)

Papalo is grown primarily in South and Central American and Southwestern states. It is used in Mexican cooking and have elements of cilantro, arugula and mint—a complex flavor. Its leaves and stems that are used as a fresh condiment and used in Mexico before the arrival of the Spanish in the 16th century. Today, its use is growing in popularity in New York kitchens as immigrant farmers grow and sell at markets. Very good in a pot of pinto beans; can be dried and retains its flavor. Also, has a high disease tolerance and wards off insects because of its oil glands.

I purchased a Papalo plant at the Asheville Herb Market in April. First, I put it in a pot with other plants and as it grew, moved it to the garden. It grew to over 5; likes sun, can tolerate drought and poor soil. It does bloom in late summer/early fall. The flowers can be brown, white, cream and can be taken indoors for the winter. One can also collect the seeds and dry the leaves for later use. It was a fun plant to grow and would like to do it again, experimenting more with different uses and watch it flower in the fall.