

FORAGING: my top 4...

All of these can be eaten raw (I would just check for bugs on them first though). When picking them try and get the 'tips' as this is where the most energy and nutrients are. It also avoids getting any 'woody' bits. I use scissors and catch the tips in a basket, as this means I don't get stung by the nettles, or risk pulling the plant out of the ground.

NETTLES

Interesting Info: They make very strong and long lasting fibres... more on that in another session.

Where they grow: Almost anywhere there are, or have been humans, they are not fussy

Health Benefits: Packed full of nutrients including vitamin C and Iron and 22% is protein

Recipes: Wild Garlic and Nettle Soup, Nettle & Mint Tea, Nettle, also see below

Wildlife Importance: excellent source of food and habitat for **butterflies** such as the red admiral, peacock and small tortoiseshell. Try and leave a wild patch in your garden to support the wildlife



CLEAVERS/GOOSEGRASS

Interesting info: covered in tiny hooks (like natural velcro), they are great for playing 'it' with. Used to be used to curdle milk to make cheese! The root can make a great red dye.

Where they grow: Almost anywhere like nettles do

Health Benefits: Very good at healing wounds, insomnia and other things

Wildlife Importance: Seeds are loved by chickens, geese and other birds



JACK BY THE HEDGE / GARLIC MUSTARD

Info: Heart shaped leaves, a little like nettles but not hairy and slightly glossy. Bundles of white flowers (with 4 petals) in summer. Main give away is the smell of crushed leaves... like garlic/onions

Where they grow: By Hedges, wasteland

Health Benefits: Fit A, C, E (some B), Potassium, Calcium, Magnesium, Selenium, Copper, Omega 3 fatty acids, strengthens digestive system... basically a whole host of amazing benefits.

Wildlife Importance: Seeds are loved by organ tip butterfly

Not to be confused with? Cow Parsley and other carrot family plants, or Dogs Mercury, which is poisonous (see PDF on 'common poisonous plants')



Wild Garlic

Info: Once the white flowers are open the smell is so strong it is hard to miss wild garlic when you are around it. All of the plant is edible (but if you dig up the root you risk destroying the habitat)

Where they grow: Often a sight of an ancient woodland, these are found in the shade near streams, bluebells

Health Benefits: Cleansing and detoxing the body, strong antibacterial qualities, good for skin and lots more, see www.healthbenefitstimes.com/wild-garlic/ for more info

Wildlife Importance: Early spring flowers are important for birds, bees and butterflies

Not to be confused with? Three Cornered Leek (invasive species). or Lords & Ladies, which is very poisonous (see PDF on common poisonous plants)



RECIPES:

All of these herbs can be eaten raw. They have so many health benefits that I cant write them on one page so do have a look online or in books. From what I understand these smash spinach and other greens out of the park in terms of heath so do give them a chance!

- chop finely and add to salads, toss into risotto, an omelette, new potatoes, blitz into pesto/hummus or mayonnaise

Wild Herb Risotto

(this recipe was inspired by Lea from Woodland Classroom)

2 tbsp Olive oil
1 Shallot or small onion (finely chopped)
1 bulb of garlic (finely chopped)
1 cup of Risotto rice
good chunk of parmesan (grated)
100ml White wine
200ml Veggie Stock
Garden Thyme for extra flavour (and decoration)
Finely chopped wild herbs (Nettles, cleavers, wild garlic and Jack by the hedge)



These ingredients are approximate as sometimes we need more or less liquid....

1. Put the oil in a pan and add the onion and the garlic. Fry until cooked but not burnt/crispy
2. Add the rice and let it soak up some 'juices' and fry for a minute or 2
3. Always stir so the rice doesn't stick to the bottom
4. Add the white wine, a little at a time letting the rice cook in it and soak it up
5. Do the same with the stock until your rice is cooked but not soggy (it will carry on cooking/absorbing for a while so you don't want to overcook it and make it go stodgy)
6. Add the parmesan and the finely chopped 'wild herbs' and mix in

Eat whilst warm.



Sources:

Foraging with Kids, Adele Nozedar
<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/things-to-do/foraging/>
www.healthbenefitstimes.com