

WILD FOOD GUIDE - APRIL/MAY

27, April, 2020



BRAMBLE LEAVES (RUBUS FRUTICOSUS)

Brambles are best known for their thorny stems and delicious fruit, however their leaves are also edible and are packed full of antioxidants and vitamin C. These leaves usually appear late April/May

There are hundreds of different species of bramble, however they are easy to identify and all species leaves are suitable. Keep an eye out for their long, thorny reddish stems. The young tender leaves are perfect for picking.

Leaves have been used medicinally for their astringent qualities, being used to treat mouth ulcers, gingivitis and sore throats.

Infuse a few fresh or dried leaves in hot water for 5 minutes for a nice fruity tea. Dried leaves should be stored in an airtight container out of sunlight.

COW PARSLEY (ANTHRISCUS SYLVESTRIS)

Cow parsley is a hollow-stemmed, tall plant that grows quickest in the summer before dying back. It likes shady habitats in particular, and can be found in woodland edges, roadside verges and hedgerows with lots of white flowers. These umbrella shaped flowers appear from May until June.



It is a member of the carrot family and is bi-annual. This plant is sometimes mistaken for hemlock which is poisonous, there are several ways to tell the difference between the two

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- *Cow parsley has a pink hue to its stem while hemlock has distinctive purple blotches on a green stem.*
 - *Cow parsley is slightly hairy, while hemlock has a smooth stem*
 - *Cow parsley stems have a groove similar to celery, hemlock doesn't.*

Cow parsley leaves have a delicate, aniseed-like flavour and can be used as a herb in cooking.

The stems of the plant can be peeled and eaten raw or boiled and used in a similar way to asparagus. These can also be pickled in jars to preserve them for longer periods of time.

HAIRY BITTERCRESS (CARDAMINE HIRSUTA)



Most gardeners consider this annual herb to be a weed, its leaves and flowers have a tangy peppery flavour.

This grows in a rosette shape, is low lying and has tiny white flowers that rise from the centre of the plant. It grows on bare soil,

plant pots, gravel and will often be found in the cracks of paving and slabs, at the bottom of walls and wasteland.

All parts of the young plant can be eaten, pick leaves and flowers from the middle of the plant (newer growth less likely to have been damaged) and wash thoroughly.

This peppery herb is great for salads, soups, pesto or a substitute for cress

WILD GARLIC (ALLIUM URSINUM)

Wild garlic, also commonly referred to as ramsons, is a native bulb that grows in clusters on damp woodland floors and hedgerows.

Leaves can appear as early as February but are best picked before the flowers have died, Usually early May.



The leaves and flowers are both edible, they possess a much mellower flavour than cultivated garlic but are very versatile. You can add the leaves to soups, sauces and omelettes, and are also a great addition to salads.

DANDELIONS (TARAXACUM OFFICINALE)

This common garden 'weed' is botanically considered as a herb. People have used the flowers, leaves, stems and roots for medicinal purposes. It is traditionally used for joint pain, eczema and as a blood toner and mild diuretic, the flowers are very high in vitamin C and other nutrients.



The leaves can be a great addition to your salad bowl as they are extremely abundant in numerous vitamins and minerals. They can also be cooked up just like any other dark leafy green

You can use the root of more mature dandelions as a caffeine free coffee substitute, roast or dehydrate and grind down.

The flowers can be harvested and used to make tea. Quarter fill a cup with dandelion flower heads, use hot water to infuse as boiling water will harm some of the beneficial qualities of the flower. Leave for 5-10 minutes with a plate over the cup.

If you have any questions or would like to show us your own creations inspired by this guide please email us at cardeneden@orevalleyha.org.uk
