


## Guide to some edible/medicinal plants in Scottish lowlands in Spring

**First of all... be safe!** When foraging, safe identification is vital! Take along a book with clear images - or/and an expert! **iSpot** is a fantastic online site for identifying wild plants and sharing images: <http://www.ispot.org.uk/plants> There are several apps too: **Pl@ntNet** and **Flora Incognita** are good ones for wildflowers, and check out the **Woodland Trust's** app for British tree ID. **Top tip:** always check the scientific name, as common names vary widely. If in doubt, leave well alone – many plants are toxic!

**And... be responsible!** Always follow the **Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC)** <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot/> This also sets out our foraging rights. Respect plants and their environment: many creatures depend on our plants for food or shelter, so always tread carefully and leave plenty for wildlife to thrive. As a rule, it is legal to forage leaves, flowers, seeds, fruit, and nuts of common plants. But harvesting roots needs permission.

For info, recipes, images and other ideas, have a look at these websites:

[www.wildflowerfinder.org.uk](http://www.wildflowerfinder.org.uk)      <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>  
<https://plantnet.org/en/> [www.plantlife.org.uk](http://www.plantlife.org.uk)      <https://gallowaywildfoods.com/>  
 Plants for A Future database: <https://pfaf.org/>      <https://eatweeds.com>


Common name	<b>Dandelion ("Pee-the-bed")</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> (Agg.)	
Where to find it	Ubiquitous, waste ground, grassy spaces	
Part used	Leaf and root	
Harvesting	Leaf: April-May; Root: autumn	
Notes	<p>Many species – useful ones have characteristic leaf shape. Leaf is high in vitamin C and minerals (notably potassium); its diuretic action is useful for mild high blood pressure. Root is useful digestive tonic – bitter compounds aid fat metabolism. Use young leaves in salads. Cleaned chopped root can be braised with a little oil, soy sauce, rice wine vinegar and a pinch of sugar to make a delicious and unusual vegetable side dish. The flower heads (yellow parts only) can be sprinkled on salads or stirred through rice dishes. There are traditional recipes for dandelion flower cordial too, and dandelion 'honey' (<i>cramailotte</i>), is a favourite in France – and very easy to make: : <a href="https://plantepusherne.dk/the-best-vegan-dandelion-honey-tastes-like-honey/">https://plantepusherne.dk/the-best-vegan-dandelion-honey-tastes-like-honey/</a></p> <p>Try making a 'dandelion trumpet'!  <a href="https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=556148785298194&amp;rd=94&amp;rd=94">https://m.facebook.com/watch/?v=556148785298194&amp;rd=94&amp;rd=94</a></p>	


Common name	<b>Plantain</b> , great plantain, waybread	
Botanical name	<i>Plantago major</i>	
Where to find it	Grassy waste ground, roadsides, waysides	
Part used	Leaves, seeds	

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Harvesting	April-June, when flowering, or in seed	
Notes	Use leaves directly as compress/poultice for wound healing. Northern/Central Europe: used instead of dock as a remedy for nettle stings. Leaves are a traditional famine food. The protein-rich seeds form after flowering; these are also tasty and nutritious added to salads or breakfast cereals, and they can help ease constipation. Also traditionally strewn on pilgrim routes. Plantago is from Latin ' <i>planta</i> ', meaning the sole of the foot - plantain has a reputation (worldwide!) for withstanding trampling. In America it arrived and spread with European settlers, becoming known as 'white man's foot'.	



Common name	<b>Ribwort, or 'Soldiers'</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	
Where to find it	Grassy meadows, waysides, roadsides	
Part used	Leaves, flower heads, seeds	
Harvesting	April-September	
Notes	Ribwort has long narrow leaves with 'ribs' along their whole length. The blackish brown flowers grow singly on a tall stem. You can eat the nutritious leaves, but they're quite bitter, so best mixed into soup, pesto or vegetable curries. Or you can use them to make a tea or syrups – helpful for hay fever or coughs caused by inflamed airways, but also for cystitis. The new flower heads taste like mushrooms, and can be used to add flavour to soups. Seeds form after flowering; these are also tasty and nutritious added to salads or breakfast cereals, and they can help with constipation too! Ribwort is often included in wildflower seed mixes as it's great for pollinators. Best of all, the plant is a traditional children's toy: known as "soldiers", the long flowering stalk was used by Scottish kids in the past to play sword-fighting – the winner was the one who kept her head (the head of the ribwort, that is!).	


Common name	<b>Wild garlic, Ramsons</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Allium ursinum</i>	
Where to find it	Deciduous mature woods	
Part used	Leaves, flowers (multiple white 6-petalled star-shaped flowerlets make up flower head)	
Harvesting	March-May	

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Notes	<p><b>Ramsons</b> has broad leaves; may be confused with poisonous species (esp. Lily of the valley) – proper ID important = <b>garlic smell!</b> Collect leaves, taking care not to pull up bulb.</p> <p>Also: <b>Few-flowered leek</b> (<i>Allium paradoxum</i>) – this has become increasingly common, but is an <b>invasive species: it is illegal to plant it or cause it to spread</b>). It matures earlier than Ramsons – around late February – and has a single vivid green, glossy, narrow leaf, triangular cross-section stem, a scruffy-looking single papery flower, followed by bulbils like miniature garlic cloves. ID important = <b>smells like a garlicky spring onion</b>. Both species are great in salads, omelettes, pesto, dips and sauces, or chopped through buttery boiled potatoes or potato salad.</p>	 <p>Above: wild garlic Below: few-flowered leek</p> 
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Common name	<b>Lesser celandine, Pilewort</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Ficaria verna</i>	
Where to find it	Damp wasteland, parkland, dappled shade	
Part used	Young leaf, root	
Harvesting	Early spring – late Feb-March	
Notes	<p>A cheery herald of spring, flowering early in the year in the UK. It is a member of buttercup family – <b>NB most buttercups are toxic!</b> Lesser celandine leaves were eaten in the past to prevent scurvy (Vitamin C deficiency). Collect leaves before flowering; add to salads or cook into omelettes etc. Older leaves accumulate toxins, which are (mostly) neutralised by cooking. Pilewort root is an old medicine (still used) for haemorrhoids (piles). The astringent fresh root is dried to neutralise toxins and produce a useful analgesic and antispasmodic remedy for external use.</p>	


Common name	<b>White deadnettle</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Lamium album</i>	
Where to find it	Waysides, woodland edges	
Part used	Leaf and flower	
Harvesting	Feb-June, often second flush in Autumn	







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Notes	This clever wee plant pretends to be a nettle, but has no sting! Often found together with stinging nettles, it is a member of the mint family – look for the typical square stem. Keynote medicinal use: urinary tract anti-inflammatory. Makes a bland but palatable tea, useful for easing cystitis symptoms. The tea can also be used externally as a soothing wash for skin rashes, particularly in the groin area. It is edible raw or cooked: add to salads, soups, omelettes/frittata – or any dish that calls for spinach. And remember to check inside the flower for the two pairs of fairy shoes (dark anthers!) - are they at home?	
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Common name	<b>Daisy, Bruisewort</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	
Where to find it	Ubiquitous, grassy spaces	
Part used	Leaf rosette & flowers	
Harvesting	Spring – early March onwards	
Notes	Tradition in some parts of the UK of making an infusion or syrup from the flowers to treat colds and coughs; a compress or ointment (Highlands and Ireland) for bruises, wounds and burns, and an infusion used to treat eye inflammations (Highlands). Food uses: leaves/flowers in salads and dips. Unopened flower buds can be pickled and used like capers. Remember to leave plenty of daisies for the bees and other pollinators!	
 <p>Images: Wikimedia Commons (cc-by-sa)</p>		


Common name	<b>Common dock, Docken / Curled dock</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i> / <i>R. crispus</i>	
Where to find it	Waste ground, rich soils, often with nettles; Curled dock in damp/coastal areas	
Part used	Leaf or leaf bud (mucilage), root, seeds	
Harvesting	Leaf before flowering; root in autumn/winter, after plant dies back; seed when brown and dry	
Notes	One of the best-known traditional 'wild' remedies in the UK (and one of the very few remaining in common use!), the dock(en) leaf is used in folk medicine – especially by children – to soothe nettle stings and midge bites and cool small burns or sunburn. The unopened leaf bud yields a particularly soothing gel. The crushed root was also applied as a poultice for stings, or boiled and taken as a laxative and digestive tonic. It is still used for dyeing fibres too. Young leaves can be	
 <p>Images: (top) <i>R. obtusifolius</i> from Floramedica workshop participant; (bottom) <i>R. crispus</i> by H Brisse via</p>		

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<p>Image (above) <i>R. obtusifolius</i> seeds: Udo Schmidt via Wikimedia Commons cc by-sa. Below: <i>R. crispus</i> seeds <a href="https://calphotos.berkeley.edu/">https://calphotos.berkeley.edu/</a> (cc by-nc 3.0)</p> 	<p>eaten raw or cooked, and the root can be pickled and eaten as a medicinal vegetable. Seeds can be harvested and ground to mix with flour for sweet/savoury biscuits. See also info at <a href="http://www.kew.org/ethnomedica/">http://www.kew.org/ethnomedica/</a></p>	<p>Wikimedia Commons cc-by-sa</p> 
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Common name	<b>Stickywilly, Cleavers, Goosegrass</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Galium aparine</i>	
Where to find it	Common weed of damp shady places, wasteland	
Part used	Aerial parts or fresh juice	
Harvesting	Before flowering; spring-early summer	
Notes	<p>Trad. spring tonic, “detox” herb: gentle diuretic and laxative, rich in silicic acid. Digestive aid. Helpful tonic after illness. Makes a soothing cup of tea, hot or cold. Try it in a smoothie with your favourite fruit or veg. The ‘sticky’ hairs helped inspire Velcro invention. The name <i>Galium</i> from Greek <i>gala</i> = milk refers to the use of stickywilly for coagulating milk and straining the curds for cheese-making.</p>	

Common name	<b>Nettle, stinging nettle</b>	 <p>“Tender-handed stroke a nettle, And it stings you for your pains; Grasp it like a man of mettle, And it soft as silk remains.” (Aaron Hill 1685-1750)</p>
Botanical name	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	
Where to find it	Woods, waste ground, near houses	
Part used	Leaf, seeds, root	
Harvesting	March-June, <u>before flowering</u> ; “second flush” in autumn	
Notes	<p>Male &amp; female plants separate. Multi-purpose plant – used for twine, fabric, paper, dye, plant food, rennet substitute, as well as food and medicine. Pick nettle tops with gloves on! The sting wilts when nettles are rubbed or cooked. Nettles taken as tea or in food can help combat allergies/hayfever. Fibres from the stems can be used to make yarn and cloth – and this is still done in many places. The green nettle seeds are rich in protein, and edible. They were also used as winter chicken feed. Ancient Romans (and modern-day Russians) beat their aching joints with stinging nettles to relieve pain and inflammation. It actually works! Nettles are one of our most nutritious wild plants, and are chock-full of vitamins and minerals - especially vitamin C, iron, calcium, magnesium and phosphorus. You can eat them in soups</p>	

	<p>and stews, cook them like spinach in omelettes, or pasta sauces, or chop them finely with garlic and crushed seeds and olive oil to make pesto:</p> <p><b>Wild nettle pesto</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2 good handfuls fresh young nettle tops (washed &amp; chopped, woody stems removed)</li> <li>- 1 handful of other tasty wild greens (washed &amp; chopped) – e.g. garlic mustard, stickywilly, baby dock leaves, dandelion leaves, ground elder</li> <li>- 1 clove garlic (or a handful of chopped wild garlic/leek)</li> <li>- 50g nuts / seeds, lightly toasted (e.g. pinenuts, hazels, or sunflower seeds)</li> <li>- 50-75ml olive oil</li> <li>- A squeeze of lemon juice (optional)</li> <li>- a good pinch of salt/pepper to season</li> </ul> <p>Either 1) Combine ingredients with the olive oil using a hand blender – no fuss! Or 2) for a more textured pesto or a wild picnic, finely chop the greens, then grind the chopped garlic and seeds/nuts with a mortar and pestle. Mix these and then add the olive oil and seasonings and mix thoroughly. Toss the pesto through 500g cooked pasta and top with grated parmesan, pecorino, or other cheese of your choice. Nettle pesto is also delicious spread on bread – try with a good cheddar or mozzarella cheese and some juicy sliced tomato.</p>	
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Common name	<b>Garlic mustard, Jack-by-the-hedge</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>	
Where to find it	Shady waste ground, woodland fringes,	
Part used	Leaves, young stems, flowers, fresh seed pods, roots	
Harvesting	March-September	
Notes	<p>Distinctive mild garlic scent; rich in Vit C &amp; A. Root can be used like horseradish. Leaves best in spring – more bitter, less flavourful in autumn.</p> <p><b>Potato and Garlic Mustard pancakes</b></p> <p>1 large potato, peeled &amp; grated</p> <p>¼ onion, grated</p> <p>1 egg</p> <p>100g plain flour (wheat, or mix 50:50 with buckwheat flour)</p> <p>1 good handful chopped garlic mustard</p> <p>1 handful chopped nettles (rubbed in a bag or blanched beforehand to remove stings)</p> <p>(optional) 1 handful grated mature cheddar cheese</p> <p>salt &amp; pepper for seasoning</p> <p>olive oil or butter for cooking</p> <p>Mix all ingredients in large bowl. Lightly coat warm frying pan with olive oil or a little butter. Spread a tablespoon of batter into pan (my pan fits about 4-5 at a time). Cook on medium high heat (turn down if oil begins to smoke!) for about 3-4 minutes until</p>	



young leaves emerging



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browned, then flip and cook another couple minutes. Delicious with a dab of soured cream or Greek yoghurt.



Common name	<b>Willow (various species)</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Salix</i> spp. ( <i>S. alba</i> , <i>S. caprea</i> ; <i>S. fragilis</i> ; <i>S. viminalis</i> (Osier))	
Where to find it	Usually damp places, close to water	
Part used	Bark, leaves	
Harvesting	Take wild bark ONLY from twigs! Take leaves any time during growing season	
Notes	Willow is an ancient remedy that was known to Egyptians & Assyrians: anti-rheumatic, antiseptic, reduces temperature, pain and inflammation. It contains <i>salicin</i> – and led to the development of Aspirin. For headaches combine willow leaves with rosemary: boil 8-10 leaves in water for 15 mins, strain and drink. Willow leaf tea can also be used in bath to relieve aches and pains. Chew on a twig till frayed and use as a natural antiseptic toothbrush!	



Image: Goat willow (pussy-willow) buds (from [stephens-views.blogspot.com](https://stephens-views.blogspot.com))

Common name	<b>Bramble, Blackberry</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> (agg.)	
Where to find it	Woodland fringes, hedgerows	
Part used	Fruit, leaves, seeds	
Harvesting	Leaves: spring/summer. Fruit: autumn	
Notes	Brambles are rich in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that are said to have a protective effect on our cells, especially the gut. Pectin in brambles makes them a useful addition to jams, jellies. The young leaves are traditionally taken as an astringent tea for diarrhoea, or as a mouthwash for mouth ulcers, gingivitis and bleeding gums. The long scrambling bramble vines can be used to make twine, ropes and baskets. This may be the 'vine' referred to in the Gaelic alphabet as <i>Muin</i> , giving the letter 'M'. There is currently research into bramble as a source for potential new antibiotics.	







Common name	<b>Sorrel / Sheep's sorrel ("Soorocks")</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Rumex acetosa</i> / <i>Rumex acetosella</i>	
Where to find it	Open meadows, waysides	
Part used	Leaf	
Harvesting	Early-mid-spring, before flowering; sometimes "second flush" in Autumn	

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<p>Notes</p>  <p>Sheep's sorrel (leaf approx. 2.5cm - can be invasive!)</p>	<p>Nutritious and thirst-quenching wayside nibble. Also stimulates appetite and digestion. Use in moderation – contains oxalic acid (kidney irritant); adds tang to soups, sauces, salads. Blend into smoothies. Traditionally considered cooling and used to treat fevers and scurvy (Vitamin C deficiency).</p> <p><i>Dip for veg sticks, bread sticks, grilled fish, chicken goujons or lamb meatballs – just mix together:</i></p> <p><i>500 ml plain whole milk Greek yoghurt</i>  <i>1 good handful fresh finely chopped sorrel leaves</i>  <i>1 clove garlic, crushed (or a handful fresh wild garlic)</i>  <i>1 pinch salt</i>  <i>1 pinch black pepper</i>  <i>1 teasp Dijon or Polish mustard</i>  <i>1 tablesp rapeseed oil</i>  <i>Finely chop all ingredients and mix thoroughly, or whizz with hand blender</i></p>	
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Common name	<b>Elder, Bourtree</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	
Where to find it	Roadsides, hedgerows, woodland edges	
Part used	Flowers, fruits	
Harvesting	When in flower (May-July), or when berries are ripe (black) (Sep-Nov)	
<p>Notes</p> 	<p>Superstitions around risk of sleeping under elder tree – not waking up, or being stolen away by faeries. Possibly refers to toxic fumes from elder wood. <i>Elderflower</i> as tea; or as cordial (now widely available in shops) with ice cream or pancakes! High in vitamin C; relieves cold/flu symptoms, reduces temperature by dilating blood vessels and inducing sweating. Anti-catarrhal and venerated immune system tonic. Autumn <i>elderberries</i> make a great syrup as a winter tonic and cold/flu preventative. Whether using flowers or berries, make sure you <b>remove all green parts – these are TOXIC!</b> Fresh elder leaves may be rubbed on skin as effective midge or fly repellent. ]</p>	



Common name	<b>Hawthorn, Mayflower</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	
Where to find it	Hedgerows, scrub, woodland fringes	
Part used	Leaves/flowers (spring) or berries (autumn)	
Harvesting	Leaves & flowers: May-June; Berries Sept-Nov	







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Notes	<i>C. monogyna</i> (single-seeded fruit) commonest in Scotland. "Ne'er cast a clout till May is oot!" means don't put your winter woollies away until the May tree (= hawthorn) is in flower. Tea made from the flowers & leaves or fruit is a relaxing heart tonic, helps to balance blood pressure. In the autumn you can use the berries (known as 'haws') in hedgerow jams & jellies – they go well with apples, rosehips or rowan berries. Or make your own tasty haw ketchup! Chinese shops sell delicious hawthorn sweets made from a closely related East Asian species - <i>Crataegus pinnatifida</i> , which is also used medicinally.	
		

Common name	<b>Common hogweed</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	
Where to find it	Waysides, field margins, open woodland fringes	
Part used	Young leaves/shoots, flowers, seeds	
Harvesting	Lvs/fls: spring/summer, seeds from July onwards	
Notes	<b>Not Giant Hogweed (<i>H. mantegazzianum</i>)</b> , which can cause photosensitive skin rash and blistering. <b>Check ID!</b> Frequent handling of common hogweed can also cause skin irritation. People allergic to celery should avoid eating common hogweed. In Iran, a related species ( <i>H. persicum</i> ), known as <i>golpar</i> , provides ingredients for many traditional recipes, both sweet and savoury. Young leaf and flower shoots of the common hogweed are delicious when lightly cooked or pickled, and are the key ingredient and origin of the traditional 'green borsch' in Ukraine. Hogweed seeds, especially when dried, taste like orange zest – great in gingerbread or spicy biscuits. With the seeds too, <b>correct ID is vital!</b>  For more info on hogweed and relatives, and recipe ideas see: <a href="http://monicawilde.com/eating-cooking-common-hogweed/">http://monicawilde.com/eating-cooking-common-hogweed/</a> & <a href="http://monicawilde.com/is-common-hogweed-poisonous/">http://monicawilde.com/is-common-hogweed-poisonous/</a>	
 <small>Image: Frank Vincentz (2007) via Wikimedia Commons</small>		
		


Common name	<b>Ground elder, Herb Gerard, Goutweed</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>	
Where to find it	(dappled) shade, hedgerows, woodland edge, gardens	
Part used	Young green shoots (up to 15cm), leaves	
Harvesting	Spring – Feb-May/June, before flowering	

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Notes	Reputedly brought to Britain by the Romans. Contains Calcium, Iron, Magnesium, Vitamin C, A. Diuretic & anti-inflammatory. Harvest as fresh young shoots (<15 cm). Trad use mashed as a hot poultice for nerve or muscle pain. Use as veg: gently fry, steam or wilt. Substitute for spinach in recipes. Can also be used instead of parsley, with hints of celery. Great as a flavour-enhancer in soups and stocks. Try in risottos, couscous salads (tabbouleh), or use in wild pesto (see wild garlic recipe) or hummus. There's a recipe for 'Pernicious Pasta' sauce (and lots more interesting info) from forest gardening blogger Alan Carter at <a href="http://www.scottishforestgarden.wordpress.com">www.scottishforestgarden.wordpress.com</a>	
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Common name	<b>Pine</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Pinus spp.</i> (e.g. Scots pine – <i>Pinus sylvestica</i> )	
Where to find it	Woodlands, often groups of several on open hillsides, remnants of ancient forest	
Part used	Edible/medicinal resin (sap), leaves (needles), bark, nuts (+ many economic uses)	
Harvesting	Mid-late spring	
Notes	<p>ID pine species: needles always in clusters of 2 or more, woody cone, hanging down. Fresh pine needle tea or cordial are reputed to help clear catarrh and boost immune system. Used externally as relief for aches and pains. Powdered resin used for wounds: antiseptic, antifungal, antiviral – and antiparasitic. Also traditionally used for fire-making, as a key ingredient in varnishes – and as rosin for violin and cello bows, and for gymnasts' hands/feet. <b>Pine-needle syrup</b> is a traditional winter tonic in Poland for preventing colds &amp; flu: Simply layer the fresh shoots (see photo on left) with raw cane sugar and leave to macerate for up to 6 months, then strain and bottle in sterilised jars or containers. Delicious drizzled over ice cream or pancakes (try instead of maple syrup) or as a drink, diluted with hot or cold water to taste.</p>	



Common name	<b>Yarrow</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	
Where to find it	Open hillsides, waysides	
Part used	Flowers and leaves	
Harvesting	Late summer, autumn	






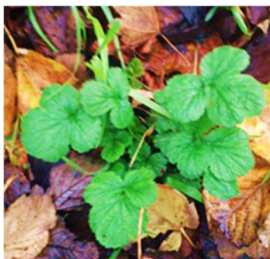
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Notes	 <p>Reduces fever, calms nerves; used to treat (excessive) bleeding (e.g. wounds, nosebleeds, or blood in coughing, vomit, urine, stool); reputed to tone blood vessels. High Vitamin C content. Strong infusion in bath to relieve pain, inflammation. Bitter, aromatic digestive tonic. Anti-inflammatory. Common across Europe, Eurasia and China. Associated with legend of Achilles, who learned from his mentor, centaur and healer Chiron, to use it to treat his companions' wounds in the Trojan war. Also used for divination in Celtic and Chinese tradition.</p> 
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Common name	<b>Chickweed</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Stellaria media</i>	
Where to find it	Around mature trees, woodland fringes, shady gardens, disturbed ground	
Part used	Aerial parts	
Harvesting	Almost all year	
Notes	 <p>Straggly plant with pretty white 5-petaled flowers close to topmost leaves. Nutritious – rich in Vitamin C, makes a good addition to salads and smoothies. Chickweed juice or infusion can be used to soothe nettle stings and dry, irritated, itchy skin.</p>	

Common name	<b>Wood avens, Herb bennet</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Geum urbanum</i>	
Where to find it	Woodland, shady lanes	
Part used	Roots and aerial parts	
Harvesting	Roots spring; aerial parts June-July (flowering)	
Notes	 <p>Leaves/flowers/stems are astringent, anti-inflammatory. Use these parts to make a digestive tea (infusion) for diarrhoea, colitis, and as mouthwash for mouth/gum infections. The fine thread-like roots (collected with permission!) are mildly clove-scented, containing the same potent antiseptic compound, <i>eugenol</i>. They can be used to make syrups or liqueurs. See <a href="http://www.gallowaywildfoods.com/wood-avens-edibility-identification-distribution/">http://www.gallowaywildfoods.com/wood-avens-edibility-identification-distribution/</a></p>	



Common name	<b>Horse chestnut</b>	
Botanical name	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	
Where to find it	Parkland, broadleaf woodland	
Part used	Nut husk (external use only!)	
Harvesting	Autumn, when ripe	
Notes	<p>Introduced into Britain from the Balkans in late 16<sup>th</sup> Century, this is a great tree for bees: the flowers provide lots of nectar and pollen. The nuts (conkers) are <b>not edible to humans</b> but provide food for squirrels and deer. The green husks were used to produce glucose during WW2! Horse chestnuts yield useful medicine for treating varicose veins, haemorrhoids and leg ulcers, and can also be used to treat frostbite: the extract is made into a gel or cream for external use. A weak soap substitute can also be made from horse chestnut leaves and fruits. And of course conkers strung on string are a traditional children's plaything – sadly now banned in schools for fear of injury. For more information, see: <a href="https://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/Conkers/">https://www.historic-uk.com/CultureUK/Conkers/</a></p> <p>Note: The delicious roast sweet chestnuts popular at Christmas are from the unrelated Spanish chestnut tree (<i>Castanea sativa</i>).</p>	<p>Fun fact: In Germany, children craft little figures of animals or people using conkers and matchsticks.</p> 

## Further reading:

- Blamey, M., R. Fitter & A Fitter, *Wild Flowers of Britain & Ireland* (2013) London: Bloomsbury (Domino Books).
- Darwin, T. (1996) *The Scots Herbal – The Plant Lore of Scotland*, Edinburgh: Mercat Press.
- Fowler, A. (2019) *A Modern Herbal*, London: Penguin/Michael Joseph.
- Hatfield, G. (2007) *Hatfield's Herbal – The Secret History of British Plants*, London: Penguin/Allen Lane.
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