**Bittercress**

*Cardamine hirsuta*

**Other Names:** hairy bittercress

**Family:** Cruciferae

**Habitat:** Gardens, rocky ground, woodland.

**Season:** Flowers - April to August but useful as a salad plant almost all through the year.

**Flower colour:** White

**Description**

This little plant grows from a central root, forming a rosette of leaves. Each leaf is made up of pairs of rounded leaflets attached along the length of the leaf stalk. It is generally dark green in colour and compact, unless it has been growing in shade. Flowering stalks grow up from the centre of the rosette. Leaves that grow from these stems have much narrower leaflets. The white flowers are just a couple of mm across. They produce long narrow seed pods.

**Possible Confusions**

Can very easily be confused with Wavey Bittercress but both have the same culinary uses so not a problem.

**Uses**

In salads and soups. A peppery flavour like watercress or mustard and cress. Also great in cheese sandwiches. Good garnishing herb to replace Rocket.
Blackberry  
*Rubus fruticosus*

**Other Names:** Bramble  
**Family:** Rosaceae  
**Habitat:** Woodland, hedgerows, waste ground and a garden weed.  
**Season:** Berries- August to September. Leaves- Spring to Autumn.  
**Flower colour:** White/pink

### Description

From a central root point the bramble sends out long sprawling thorny stems which can be 5m long. The leaves are made up of 3 or 5 pointed oval leaflets. These have a saw tooth edge and have thorns down the midrib on the underneath. Leaves and stems can turn reddish as the summer progresses. Flowers appear from late June and are white sometimes with a hint of pink. The small green fruit can be seen soon after the flowers have faded. These swell, turn red and then ripen to black in August.

### Possible Confusions


### Uses

Berries in pies, jam and crumbles.
Blackthorn  
*Prunus spinosa*

**Other Names:** Sloe, Sloeberry  
**Family:** Rocaceae  
**Habitat:** Hedgerows, woodland and waste ground.  
**Season:** Berries - September to October.  
**Flower colour:** White

**Description**

The first hedgerow tree to blossom. The small, white, five petaled flowers come out in early spring before the leaves. Blackthorn leaves are a narrow oval shape they have tiny serrations around the edge and are between 2 and 5cm long. There are long thorns on old wood which can cause septic scratches – so be careful. The hard green sloes form during the summer, then in autumn they ripen to blue/black–often with a grey bloom.

**Possible Confusions**

**Uses**

Sloes are used to make the classic countryman's drink Sloe gin. Can also be used to make jams and jellies.
**Burdock**

*Arctium minus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Names</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Compositae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat</td>
<td>Waste ground, woodland edges, roadsides and scrub.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>Roots - Late summer to early spring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower colour</td>
<td>Purple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description**

A native biennial, taking two years to flower. The young leaves are grey/green and hairy, as the leaves get bigger they retain their grey/green colour and rough texture but look less hairy. The pale stalks and leaf ribs often have a purplish hue. The leaves are big and roughly heart shaped, they are longer that they are wide - up to 50cm long. The plant re-grows in its second spring and sends up its flowering stalk. This is up to 1.3m tall, with smaller leaves and has round purplish flowers. These become the familiar hooked burrs that catch on clothes.

**Possible Confusions**

Butterburr is sometimes mistaken for Burdock. Butterburr favours wet ground and has a much rounder leaf.

**Uses**

Roots Boiled or roasted as like a parsnip. Dandelion and burdock cordial, Burdock game chips. The roots can be dried for later use in cordials and infusions.
Bush vetch  

*Vicia sepium*

**Other Names:**

**Family:** Leguminosae

**Habitat:** Hedgerows, woodland, gardens

**Season:**

**Flower colour:** Purple

---

**Description**

A common sprawling plant that can grow up to 60 cm tall. The flowers are a pinky purple colour and occur in clusters along the stem from Spring right through to late summer. Each leaf is made up of 10-20 leaflets arranged in pairs opposite one another. On the end of the leaf is a branched tendril with which the plant climbs. After the flowers flat, green pods grow which fill out with tiny peas and then turn black.

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**Possible Confusions**

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**Uses**

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**Chickweed (Stellaria media)**

**Other Names:**

- 

**Family:** Caryophyllaceae

**Habitat:** Wasteground, gardens, woodland, hedgerows

**Season:** Leaves - Spring to Autumn

**Flower colour:** White

---

**Description**

An annual weed that can form 50cm mounds on rich soil. Where there are fewer nutrients plants sprawl to 35cm, but usually no more than 15cm tall. This bright green coloured plant has 1-2cm pointed oval leaves, with one main vein running down the centre. The stems are pale green, slightly crisp but fleshy and break easily. If you look carefully you will see a line of fine hairs running down the stem. The flowers are white and up to 5mm across. Each of the 5 petals has a deep V in the outside making it look nearly like 2 petals.

---

**Possible Confusions**

There is a possibility that Chickweed may be confused with the poisonous Yellow Pimpernel before flowering. The pimpernel does not have the line of hairs down the stem that Chickweed has. Chickweed leaves become mushy when squeezed Pimpernel leaves do not.

---

**Uses**

Whole plant in soups and salads and as a cooked vegetable. The plant has the taste of newly podded peas and is found in large patches so easily foraged.
### Cleavers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Names</th>
<th>Sticky jack, sticky willy,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Rubiaceae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat</td>
<td>Hedgerows, woods, waste places and as a garden weed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>Leaves- spring to summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower colour</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Description

One of the first plants to emerge in spring, it has a distinctive growth pattern where rings of narrow slightly bristly leaves are borne at regular intervals along the slightly bristly stem. The plants leaves are up to 3cm long. It will generally climb up the plants near it, managing to grow through hedges up to 1.5m. The tiny greenish white flowers open in summer to be followed little hard ball seeds that stick to your socks. Cleavers has tiny downward facing prickle on the stems this makes them seem sticky.

### Possible Confusions

- **SWINTON PARK**

### Uses

Leaves and stalks in soups and as a cooked vegetable. A good inclusion in soups, stews and stocks. Stem is quite stringy and needs to be finely chopped. Once the round ball like seeds appear the plant is no good to eat.
Common Sorrel

**Rumex acetosa**

**Other Names:**

**Family:** Polygonaceae

**Habitat:** Grassland, roadsides and woods

**Season:** Leaves - March to October

**Flower colour:** Pinky green

**Description**

A perennial plant that grows to 80cm tall when flowering. Outside its flowering season common sorrel has oval dark green leaves up to 12cm long and 4cm wide. The leaves have two pointed lobes that stick back from the leaf stem. The flowers grow on stems up to 80cm tall and are like little red and green beads. The leaves on the flowering stalks are smaller and more pointed than those that grow from the ground. They clasp around the stem.

**Possible Confusions**

The lobed leaves of Sorrel have been confused with the more arrow shaped leaves of Arum lily. Arum lily is poisonous and care should be taken to correctly identify Sorrel.

**Uses**

The leaves of Common Sorrel have an almost citrus like tartness that makes them an exciting addition to salads and as a garnish for fish. The leaves can also be cooked and sweetened with sugar to flavour sweet dishes.
**Common vetch**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Names</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong>:</td>
<td><strong>Leguminosae</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Habitat</strong>:</td>
<td>Hedges, woodland edges, grassland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Season</strong>:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flower colour</strong>:</td>
<td>Pinky purple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description**

A sprawling annual plant with stems up to 1m in length. Common Vetch can grow upright to 40cm if it has a nearby climbing frame. The leaves are made up of 8-10 pairs of thin leaflets with tendrils on the ends. The flowers form at the leaf joints and are a bright pink/purple colour. They are in twos or threes and are approx 2cm long. Green pods form after the flowers containing 4-12 seeds. These turn brown and hairy as the seeds ripen.

**Possible Confusions**

**Uses**

Shoots used in salad and as a garnish. Pods in salads or cooked like tiny Mangetout.
# Corn Mint

**mentha arvensis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Names :</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family :</td>
<td>Labiatae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat :</td>
<td>Arable fields, woods, damp places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season :</td>
<td>leaves and flowers- Late spring to Autumn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower colour :</td>
<td>Light purple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Description

A perennial herb that grows to different heights depending on conditions. 15 – 60cm. Late to appear in the spring, the leaves are rounded at first becoming oval and pointed as the summer goes on. The leaves are a light green, have a blunt tooth edge and are quite thin and papery. The stem is square in section. The pale purple flowers appear in July, and open in the leaf joints in the top section of stem. The crushed leaf smells distinctively of mint but has a flowery mint taste. Corn mint dies back in autumn.

## Possible Confusions

## Uses

This plant has a lovely floral mint flavour and is a great flavouring herb as well as making excellent mint tea.
## Crabapple

*Malus sylvestris*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Other Names:</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family:</strong></td>
<td>Rosaceae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Habitat:</strong></td>
<td>Hedgerows and scrub.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Season:</strong></td>
<td>Fruit- September, October.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flower colour:</strong></td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Description

A deciduous native tree, common in old hedgerows. Crab Apple trees grow up to 10m. The white blossom with pink buds forms in clusters on small branches and can be seen in mid spring. The leaves are oval with a point and vary in size from 3 to 7cm long. The leaves have a toothed edge and are a dark green colour. The branches and twigs are knobbly. True crab apple trees have thorns but lots of modern variants do not. The fruits are usually in bunches and are pale green or yellowish, 2 – 3cm across.

### Possible Confusions

- **SWINTON PARK**
- **Wild food Calendar**

### Uses

Crabapples are full of pectin which is the substance that makes jams and jellies set. Added to low pectin berries like those of Hawthorn they help with flavour and setting.
**Daisy**  
*Bellis perennis*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A native perennial found in short grass. The leaves are dark green and slightly leathery. They are spoon shaped, with a bluntly toothed edge. The leaves and flowering stalks come from a central root. The flowers are on individual stalks with a yellow disc of tiny florets in the centre and white petals around the edge. Sometimes the petals are tinted with pink. Flowering is from February to December but the peak is in late spring. The plant sits close to the ground and can spread to form patches. The flowering stems are between 5 and 20cm tall.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Confusions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaves and flowers in salads.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dandelion

Other Names:

Family: Compositae

Habitat: Grassland, gardens

Season: Flowers March to September

Flower colour: Yellow

Description

A common perennial plant that can grow to 40cm tall. Dandelions have a deep tap root and the leaves and flowers grow from this central point. The leaves are hairless with a heavily toothed edge - some more so than others. Both leaf and flower stalks can be tinted with pinkish colours, they exude a latex like milk when snapped. The flowers open from March to October but in mid spring they are at their peak. Each flower head is made up of numerous petals that form golden yellow discs 3-5cm across. They open in the sun then after a couple of weeks they close to reopen as Dandelion clocks.

Possible Confusions

Uses

The bitter young leaves make a good addition to wild salads. The buds can be pickled like capers. The flowers make tasty Dandelion bhajis and fritters. A flavoured syrup can be made from the flower heads.
Elder (Sambucus nigra)

Other Names:

Family: Caprifiliaceae

Habitat: woods, hedges and waste places

Season: Flowers May, June
         Berries Aug to Nov

Flower colour: White

Description:
A deciduous small tree or shrub that can grow to 8m. It has very ridged, corky looking bark on old trunks and often has dead wood within the tree. Young straight shoots can sometimes be seen with grey or green stems, these have pith inside. The leaves are made up of 5-7 oval smaller leaves. They are pointed at the end and have a serrated edge. Flower buds form in flat topped clusters, looking like little round, green beads. Then creamy flowers open in May – June with their distinctive scent. These clusters become berries in autumn changing from green to black when ripe.

Possible Confusions:

Uses:
Elder buds can be pickled like tiny capers. The flowers can be made in to many things, the best being Elderflower champagne, wine and sweet fritters. Later in the year the berries can be made into jams and jellies or savoury ketchups.
A native annual plant that can grow to 1.5m tall in good conditions. It has soft light greyish green leaves that are almost pearly when young. The texture is slightly mealy and is waterproof so rain just rolls off the leaf. The leaf shape is very variable. They are longer than they are wide often having a toothed edge. Sometimes they have two triangular points near the leaf stalk. The stalks branch as the plant grows taller and the leaves become smaller. The flowers are like tiny grey beads arranged along the tips of stalks. They are usually greenish white but can be pinky red also. After this the seeds ripen and the plant dies with the first
Gorse

*Ulex europaeus*

**Other Names:**

**Family:** Leguminacae

**Habitat:** Heaths and moors

**Season:** Flowers March to July

**Flower colour:** Yellow

**Description**

An evergreen shrub growing to 2.5m high, it forms dense thickets in which animals love to dig burrows. The overall colour is dark grey green, its hard thin branches are covered with spikes up to 4cm long. It has golden yellow flowers from March onwards with other Gorses flowering later. The buds are oval and pointed, the flowers have upper and lower petals like a pea flower and smell of coconut, especially when the sun is out.

**Possible Confusions**

Western gorse (Ulex gallii) Similar uses so not a problem  Dwarf Gorse (Ulex minor) Sminlar uses so not a problem.

**Uses**

Gorse flowers have the smell and taste of coconut and can be used in salads and to flavour syrups and wine.
Ground Elder  
*Aegopodium podagraria*

**Other Names:**

**Family:** Umbelliferae

**Habitat:** Prolific garden weed also in hedges and roadsides.

**Season:** Leaves. March to May

**Flower colour:** White

**Description**

A perennial plant that can spread to form dense patches. The leaves grow to approximately 30cm tall, the flowering stalks to 70cm. The leaves grow straight out of the ground in early spring. They have a grooved stalk which divides into 3 and each of these 3 stalks has 3 leaves on it. These oval leaves have a serrated edge and a pointed end. There are also smaller leaves with fewer leaflets. In early summer the plant sends up a grooved flowering stem. This branches and has umbrellas of white flowers (sometimes pinkish) which smell a bit like celery and aniseed.

**Possible Confusions**

It is very important that you be very careful with your identification of the umbelliferae family as this contains some of the deadliest plants in Britain. Be sure of your identification!

**Uses**

Great tasting if a little papery in texture the leave of Ground Elder are very good in curries and as a cooked vegetable.
**Hawthorn**

*Crataegus monogyna*

**Other Names:** Bread and cheese

**Family:** Rosaceae

**Habitat:** Hedgerows and woodland margins

**Season:** Leaves March. Blossom May-June. Berries August-November

**Flower colour:** White/pink

**Description**

A native thorny, tree that grows to 10m tall: It has pale green new leaves in early spring 4 - 5cm long. The leaves have 3 - 7 lobes and turn dark green as summer progresses. Hawthorn has white or pink blossoms in clusters of up to 16. These fragrant flowers open in May turning into green berries during summer. As the season changes to autumn the berries ripen red. The dangling fruit have a stone in the middle and often stay on the tree after it loses its leaves and well into winter.

**Possible Confusions**


**Uses**

Leaves in salad when very young. Blossom to flavour syrups and alcoholic drinks, Berries for jellies and fruit leathers. Should not be eaten by people with heart problems, or taking heart regulating drugs.
Hedge Garlic

**Alliaria petiolata**

### Other Names:
Jack by the hedge. Sauce

### Family:
Cruciferae

### Habitat:
Wood edges, hedgerows, gardens

### Season:

### Flower Colour:
White

### Description

### Possible Confusions

### Uses
Leaves can be eaten raw or cooked and have a onion/garlic taste. Quite bitter if eaten raw but good in stuffings. Flowers as for leaves. Seeds can be used as you would mustard seeds. Roots are a substitute for horseradish. Seeds and root can be dried for storage.
**Japanese rose**  
*_rosa rugosa_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Names</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong></td>
<td>Rosaceae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Habitat</strong></td>
<td>Hedgerows, gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Season</strong></td>
<td>Late summer-Autumn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flower colour</strong></td>
<td>Magenta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description**

The whole look is of a robust plant, the shrub is dense and thorny. It grows to about 2m. The leaves are made up usually of 7 heavily veined leaflets. They have a leathery look. It has bright magenta pink single flowers that have the scent of ‘Turkish delight’. The petals look like they’re made from tissue paper. The flowers bloom first in June and again in early autumn when some of the rose hips are ripe. The rose hips are fat and round, ripening from orange to a bright red.

**Possible Confusions**

**Uses**

Flowers to flavour desserts, syrups, jellys (Turkish delight). The fruit are nice and large and can be used to make syrups and jams. High in Vitamin C.
Ox-eye daisy  
*leucanthemum vulgare*

### Other Names:
Dog daisy

### Family:
Compositae

### Habitat:
Grassland, roadsides

### Season:
May-August

### Flower colour:
White/Yellow

### Description
A native perennial that flowers from May through to August. It’s leaves are dark green and spoon shaped with a round toothed edge. The narrow end of the spoon forms a stalk where it meets the centre of the plant. A flowering stem grows up from the centre, this branches and the first daisy flowers at the top followed by subsequent flowers on the branches of the stem. There are small stalkless leaves on the stem. The flowers are approximately 4cm across with golden yellow centres and white petals.

### Possible Confusions

### Uses
The flowers fried in tempura batter make a delicious, crunchy and very pretty garnish for desserts.
### Pineapple weed

**Pineapple weed**

*Chamomilla suaveolens*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Names</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Compositae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat</td>
<td>Roadsides, trampled ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>May-August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower colour</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description**

This annual plant grows up to 20cm tall and has fine fern like leaves. It flowers from June to October. The flowers are unusual looking as they look more like buds than flowers. They have no obvious petals just yellow/green domes. The most obvious feature of this plant is its smell. If you crush the dome like flowers you will smell pineapple.

**Possible Confusions**

**Uses**

As the name suggests this weed smell and tastes of pineapple without the acidity. Can be used raw and infused into syrups and alcohol. Can also be candied.
**Rosebay Willowherb**  
*Epilobium augustifolium*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Names</th>
<th>Fireweed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Onagraceae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat</td>
<td>Waste places, woods, road-sides and at the side of paths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>Leaves April-July. Pith May-August</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower colour</td>
<td>Pink</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Description

A perennial plant that grows to a height of approx 1.2m. When this plant starts growing in early spring the stalks are noticeably pinkish. The leaves are long, narrow and pointed with a definite midrib. They are untoothed and smooth to the touch. The plant grows without branching and flowers form on the stem. They are dark pink with four petals and white stamens. They open in midsummer forming long flower spikes. These are followed by seeds in long, narrow, pink seedpods.

### Possible Confusions

Rosebay Willowherb can be confused with Great Willowherb. Rosebay has a darker green, hairless leaf. The leaves of Greater Willowherb are noticeably downy are lighter green and have a lightly toothed edge. Do not eat Greater Willowherb!

### Uses

Leaves as a cooked vegetable. The young shoots in spring fried in butter are excellent. The pith in the stem can be used to thicken soups.
### Rowan

**sorbus aucuparia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Names</th>
<th>Mountain ash</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Rosaceae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat</td>
<td>Woodland, mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower colour</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description**

A small native deciduous tree growing to 15m tall. The leaves are made up of 10-14 small leaflets arranged opposite each other along a central leaf rib. The one on the end gives the leaf a point. They have a fine saw tooth edge and the whole leaf is approximately 10-15cm long. The tree has creamy white clusters of tiny blossoms in May. These produce berries which swell and turn from green to orange/red in late summer and autumn.

**Possible Confusions**

**Uses**

Berries are tart and flavoursome. Use for flavouring and in Rowan jelly to go with cold cuts, game and cheese.
Scots Pine  
*Pinus sylvestris*

**Other Names:**

**Family:** Pinaceae

**Habitat:** Woodland

**Season:** Shoots April-May. Needles all year.

**Flower colour:** N/A

### Description

An evergreen coniferous tree which can grow to 36m. When the tree is young the shoots and pine needles are accessible. The blue, green, needles are approximately 5cm long and are set in pairs they can be identified by snapping them and seeing tiny hairs in the structure. When the tree is larger it can be identified by its distinctively reddish brown bark.

### Possible Confusions

### Uses

Used as a flavouring for syrups, alcohol and ices. Pine is to be found on the menu in restaurants like Heston Blumenthals 'Fat Duck'. The needle can also be used to make a tea that is packed with vitamin C.
Sheeps Sorrel

_Rumex acetosella_

**Other Names:**

**Family:** Polygonaceae

**Habitat:** Heaths and grassland

**Season:** February-October

**Flower colour:** Pinky green

**Description**

A hairless perennial growing up to 30cm tall. This plant is around for most of the year. Its 2 - 6cm leaves are quite rounded in spring when the plant lies close to the ground, but as the plant grows taller in the summer the leaves up the flowering stem become narrower. If you turn a leaf towards you it looks a bit like a long nosed sheep! Flowering time is May to August. The flowers are like minute red balls clustered on the top of a branched stalk. The leaves often take on reddish tints in autumn.

**Possible Confusions**

The lobed leaves of Sorrel have been confused with the more arrow shaped leaves of Arum lily. Arum lily is poisonous and care should be taken to correctly identify Sorrel.

**Uses**

The leaves of Sheeps Sorrel have an almost citrus like tartness that makes them an exciting addition to salads and as a garnish for fish. The leaves can also be cooked and sweetened with sugar to flavour sweet dishes.
Smooth Sowthistle

*Sonchus cleraceus*

Other Names: 

Family: Compositea

Habitat: Waste ground, roadsides, field edges

Season: Leaves April-May

Flower colour: Yellow

Description

A native annual. Some seeds germinate and grow through the winter, others germinate in spring. All produce a rosette of leaves before the flowering stem. The leaf is variable with geometric lobes and a roughly triangular leaf tip; they look prickly but are not. The leaves feel cool and fleshy, the white midrib crunches between your fingers. The plant is matt grey/green sometimes with pink tints. The milky flowering stalk can grow up to 1.2m. It has leaves that clasp on to it and loose clusters of lemon yellow, dandelion like flowers at the top. They are between 1 and 2cm across and open from July – October.

Possible Confusions

Uses

Spiced and stir fried the leaves of Smooth sowthistle make an good accompaniment for curries. They can also be used as a boiled or steamed green vegetable.
Other Names:

Family: Chenopodiaceae

Habitat: Wasteland, roadsides

Season:

Flower colour: Pink

Description

A native annual plant that can grow up or can sprawl if it is in a coastal environment. It has soft light green leaves that have a slight greyishness to them. The texture is that of the softest kid leather. The leaf is basically triangular in shape but can be variable. Large leaves are shaped like a spear head. Sometimes the two bottom corners of a leaf turn upwards, sticking out like spurs. The flowers are like tiny balls arranged along the tips of stalks coming out of the main stem. They are usually greenish white but can be pinky red also. The plant can grow to 70cm in July-September when it’s flowering. After this the seeds ripen and the plant dies.

Possible Confusions

Uses

Use as an alternative to spinach. Excellent simply cooked with a little butter and seasoned with black pepper.
## Spear thistle

*Cirsium vulgare*

### Other Names

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family:</th>
<th>Compositae</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Habitat:</td>
<td>Waste ground, roadsides, gardens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season:</td>
<td>Leaf ribs March-July. Stem shoots April to August.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower colour:</td>
<td>Purple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Description

During winter this biennial lies as a basal rosette of spiny grey green leaves close to the ground. As spring turns to summer new, greener, leaves grow to about 30cm long, and start to stand more upright. The leaves are coarse textured and not at all shiny. A spiny, stalk grows to between 50cm and 1.5m and has purple thistle flowers up to 4cm across and 5cm long. Sometimes the flowers are solitary sometimes in clusters.

### Uses

The leaf ribs and young stalks of Spear thistle, once the spines and hairs have been removed, have the texture of celery and can be added to salads or better still steamed lightly and glazed with butter.
**Stinging nettle**  
*Urtica dioica*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Names :</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family :</td>
<td>Urticaceae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat :</td>
<td>waste ground, hedges fields and as a garden weed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Season :</td>
<td>leaves February-June.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower colour :</td>
<td>Grey green</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description**

A perennial plant that can grow to 2m tall. One of the first plants to re-grow in spring, the stinging nettle has characteristically sharp points on its leaves. When the leaves are very young they are quite rounded and small, (although they still have sharp angular edges with stinging points). As the plant gets bigger the leaves become more triangular. The leaves are opposite each other on the hairy stalks. The plant produces pendulous grey/green flowers in the leaf joints at the top of the plant. They are approximately 3cm long and look a little like spindly catkins.

**Possible Confusions**

**Uses**

Nettles are hugely versatile and can be used in all sorts of dishes from pestos to pies. Blanching the leaves gets rid of the sting, then use them as you would spinach. A good and refreshing herbal tea can be made from the leaves.
White deadnettle

**lamium album**

**Other Names:**

**Family:** Lamiaete

**Habitat:** Hedges, wasteground and as a garden weed.

**Season:** Leaves March-August

**Flower colour:** White

**Description**

This Nettle looks remarkably similar to the Stinging Nettle when it is young. The differences are that the green is a lighter brighter colour and the leaves are slightly downy, the points on the leaves are not as sharp and do not sting. The leaves do not have a particular smell when crushed. The White Dead Nettle grows to between 40 and 60cm tall and has square brittle stems. It has white flowers from March to November although most open in spring. They are clustered around the stems above the leaf joints.

**Possible Confusions**

**Uses**

White Deadnettle flowers and leaves can be used as a cooked vegetable and in soups. Not as good as Stinging nettle but without the sting!
**Wild Garlic**  \( Allium Usinum \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Names</th>
<th>Bear garlic, Ramsons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Liliaceae</td>
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<tr>
<td>Habitat</td>
<td>Damp places and woods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower colour</td>
<td>White</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Description**

A hairless perennial that forms large patches. The leaves emerge in early spring growing to 30cm long. They are smooth, oval and pointed and come straight out of the ground on a short leaf stalk. Crush part of a leaf - it smells of Garlic. The flowers follow in April/May and are like little umbrellas of white stars held above the leaves on stalks about 30cm tall. These turn into seeds after a few weeks and what was white stars is now green balls. The whole plant dies back in late spring not to be seen again until the following year.

**Possible Confusions**

Before the plants have flowered people have confused Lily of the valley with Wild Garlic. The easy method to tell the difference is that wild garlic smells of garlic, Lily of the valley does not!

**Uses**

All parts of this plant are edible. Try the leaves and flowers in salads or the leaves alone in garlic soup. Seeds can be pickled and preserved for the winter months.
Wild Horseradish

**Other Names:**

**Family:** Cruciferae

**Habitat:** Roadsides, wasteland

**Season:** Roots May-August

**Flower colour:** White

**Description**

A robust Perennial with erect shiny green leaves. The leaves grow quickly in spring to approximately 70cm by early summer. They are long and oval in shape with a wavy edge. Most of the leaves are very finely scalloped but sometimes there will be an unusual leaf that is deeply cut giving it a feathery look. Leaf veins are white. The flower stalk grows above the leaves and clusters of small, white 4 petalled flowers come out in sprays in midsummer. To confirm your identification make a cut into the root and you will smell horseradish. The plant dies back in autumn.

**Possible Confusions**

**Uses**

Horseradish sauce. Grate the root into cream or crème fraiche to make the traditional accompaniment to roast beef.
**Wild Raspberry**  *rubus idaeus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Names :</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong> :</td>
<td>Rosaceae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Habitat</strong> :</td>
<td>Hedgerows, woodland, scrub-land</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Season</strong> :</td>
<td>May-October</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flower colour</strong> :</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description**

The plant has a creeping root system which sends up new canes each year. Young canes are light green and covered with narrow, brown thorns. As they age they become a golden brown and lose their thorns. The leaves are very similar to a blackberry leaf i.e. Made up of 3 pointed oval parts that meet at the leaf stalk. The leaves are roughly toothed around the edge and distinctively very pale underneath. The blossoms appear from May on short stalks, they are tiny and the white petals fall off very easily. The raspberries ripen from green to red in July.

**Possible Confusions**

**Uses**

Berries used as for cultivated varieties. The leaves make good herbal teas and infusions.
**Wood avens**  
*Geum urbanum*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Names</th>
<th>Herb Bennet, Herba bene-</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Rosaceae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitat</td>
<td>Damp woods, hedges and shady places.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Season</td>
<td>Roots all year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flower colour</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
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</table>

### Description

A slightly downy perennial up to 60cm tall. The leaves and stalks come from a central root. They stay through the winter close to the ground. The early spring leaves are rounded and tend to be made up of 3 leaflets, with a toothed edge. As the plant grows leaves with more leaflet appear, they are of unequal size but the end one is always the largest. The flowering stalk grows, in spring, the leaves growing up it becoming more pointed. Flowering time is from May through to midsummer. The flowers are yellow with 5 petals and the seeds are round reddish balls with bristles on.

### Possible Confusions

Water Avens. Has the same culinary uses so no problem.

### Uses

The leaves can be used as a vegetable but are a bit furry. The roots have a wonderful warm taste of cloves. Can be used with apples and milk puddings, but it is excellent used to flavour bread sauce to accompany game dishes.
Wood sorrel

**Oxalis acetosella**

**Other Names:**

**Family:** Oxalidaceae

**Habitat:** Woods and hedges

**Season:** Leaves January-November

**Flower colour:** White

**Description**

A perennial plant that is around all year: The leaf is made up of 3 heart shaped parts attached to a delicate leaf stalk. The leaves are a bright light green when young becoming darker green as they age. The leaf stalks are pinkish. It has new growth in spring and small, white flowers from March to May. The 5 delicate petals have pale purple veins and the flowers have a yellow centre. The plant grows to 10cm tall.

**Possible Confusions**

**Uses**

Leaves as salad and for flavouring. (sharp, tart apple taste). You can even use this to colour and flavour cake icing!
Wood vetch  

**vicia sylvatica**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Names:</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family:</td>
<td>Leguminosae</td>
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<tr>
<td>Habitat:</td>
<td>Woodland, cliffs, Shingle</td>
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<td>Season:</td>
<td>May-July</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower colour:</td>
<td>Pink/white</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Description**

A native climbing perennial that winds its tendrils round nearby plants. The stems can reach 1.3m long. The leaves are a mid green colour and are made up of between 14 and 18 oval leaflets set in opposite pairs along a central leaf rib. Each leaflet is approximately 1cm long and each leaf is about 6cm with a branching tendril on the end. The flowers are a very pale purple, almost white in some cases, and are in clusters at the ends of the stems. These open from June to August and are followed by green pea pods approximately 3cm long.

**Possible Confusions**

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**Uses**

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