

Edible wild plants for beginners



The joys of harvesting

People have been foraging in and harvesting from nature as long as we have existed. Over time, we have cultivated many plants to bring out desired characteristics, for use as food, in medicine or as textiles. Other edible plants have survived as 'weeds'. In this brochure, we wish to highlight ten edible wild plants that you can find throughout Norway. We hope you will be inspired to start visiting the tasty, free food store that exists right outside your door.

The Public Right of Access gives everyone the right to roam and camp freely in the countryside – irrespective of who owns the land. The right to forage is part of the public right of access. It gives you the right to pick wild flowers, plants, berries and mushrooms when you show due care and consideration. Remember that rare species of berries, mushrooms and flowers are protected from picking and that there are specific rules for foraging in protected areas and nature reserves.

The Outdoor Recreation Act § 5

(Public Right of Access: Right to Forage):

«While enjoying the public right of access to uncultivated land, members of the public may harvest wild nuts for immediate consumption and, on condition that it is done with due care and consideration, pick wild flowers, plants, berries and wild mushrooms, as well as the roots of wild plants and take them with them.»

The Nature Diversity Act § 15

sub-paragraph two (The Management Principle):

«The harvesting or other removal of wild plants and mushrooms is permitted as far as this does not threaten the survival of the population in question and is not limited by law or resolutions made subject to law.»

The one-two-three of good foraging:

- 1 Knowledge**
Always be 100% sure of what you are picking; don't taste anything you are not sure about.
- 2 Pick sustainably**
Learn how the various plants may be picked in an acceptable manner. Foreign species and plants such as geitrams (p. 7) or løvetann (p. 11) you can pick as much as you like. Where other plants are concerned, you need to be aware that they should still be growing there next year too – and that other foragers may also be there after you. You should leave rare, red-listed plants or very small populations alone. Find out what category a plant belongs to in your locality before picking it.
- 3 A little goes a long way**
It often happens that you enjoy yourself so much while foraging that you forget you need enough time to deal with your haul when you get home.

The best way to preserve your plants until you get home is to collect them in air-tight plastic bags, knotted freezer bags, for example, or zip-lock bags. This will keep them fresh and crispy for up to a week in your refrigerator. Many plants are good after blanching and freezing, while others can be dried and used as spices or tea.

Do you want to learn more about the world of edible wild plants?

The Norwegian Association for Mycology and Foraging has lots on offer for anyone wanting to learn more about picking and using edible wild plants. Various activities are organised by our societies, which are spread across the country. We hold courses where you can learn about making food and plant identification, and organise tours where you can learn where such plants can be picked. We organise national events at different locations every year.

The Norwegian Association for Mycology and Foraging provide training and consultation through our certified plant foraging experts. The plant foraging experts have been through an extensive botanical training where they learn to identify about 120 wild plant species. They must pass a practical plant identification exam, where they also have to provide information on use and toxicity in order to become certified. There are currently 63 plant foraging experts in Norway.

Become a member! You'll then have access to members-only courses and benefit from reduced participation fees on others. You'll also get our magazine *Sopp og nyttevekster* four times a year – with lots of tips and experience of using edible wild plants from both sea and land.

Soppognyttevekster.no/kalender
Soppognyttevekster.no/medlemskap

There are lots of good ways to build up your knowledge about edible wild plants. A good place to start is to get a flora, that is to say a book which provides you with the key to plants' characteristics. They come in all weights and sizes, for home use or use in the field. The most comprehensive flora for Norwegian plants is *Gyldendals Store Nordiske Flora* (Bo Mossberg and Lennart Stenberg, Gyldendal 2018).

There are many books about wild plants that give both plant characteristics and recipes for how to use them in the kitchen. Be aware that knowledge relating to a plant's edibility may have altered over the years, so use new and updated literature. At the same time, older books may contain excellent recipes that have long since been forgotten! Search internet bookshops with phrases such as «foraging», «edible wild plants», «wild food» or «food from nature» and you'll soon find what's available today. The selection changes from year to year.

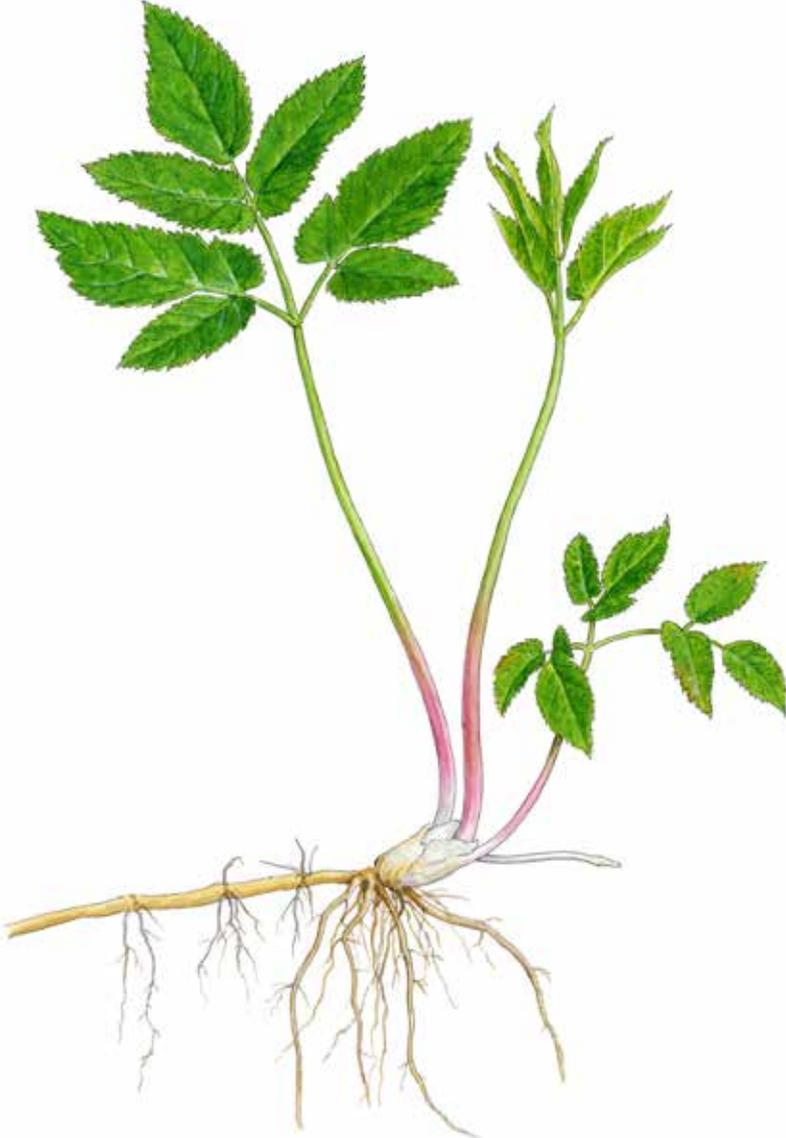
The Norwegian Association for Mycology and Foraging maintains an up-to-date list of available literature. This may be found at soppognyttevekster.no/ressurser/fagliteratur-nyttevekster



Skvallerkål

Aegopodium podagraria

Skvallerkål can often be found in gardens or growing wild in parks or beside roads. The young, light-green leaves taste best. Note that the leaves become bitterer with age and as their colour begins to dull. Remember that there are a number of poisonous species in the umbellifer family so it is important to learn to tell them apart.



Edible parts: Flowers and young leaves. **Culinary tips:** Pesto, salads, soups, omelettes and pie filling. The leaves can also be dried into 'crisps' in the oven.

Engkarse

Cardamine pratensis

Engkarse thrives in damp habitats. The pale pink to lilac flowers are easy to recognise when blooming across meadows and lawns. Although engkarse looks fragile or delicate, it has a strong flavour. Lots of very tasty *Brassica* family members grow in Norway. The related skogskarse (*Cardamine flexuosa*) with its white flowers tastes somewhat milder.



Edible parts: Leaves and flowers. **Culinary tips:** Instead of wasabi with sushi, pesto, herb butter, or sprinkled over tomato salad or oven-baked vegetables.

Stornesle

Urtica dioica

Stornesle – or brennesle which is a more common name – is very rich in nutrients. They often grow in ditches or beside roads and we recommend the use of gloves when picking. If you leave two pairs of leaves on the stem, you will be able to harvest new shoots throughout the season until the plant begins to flower.

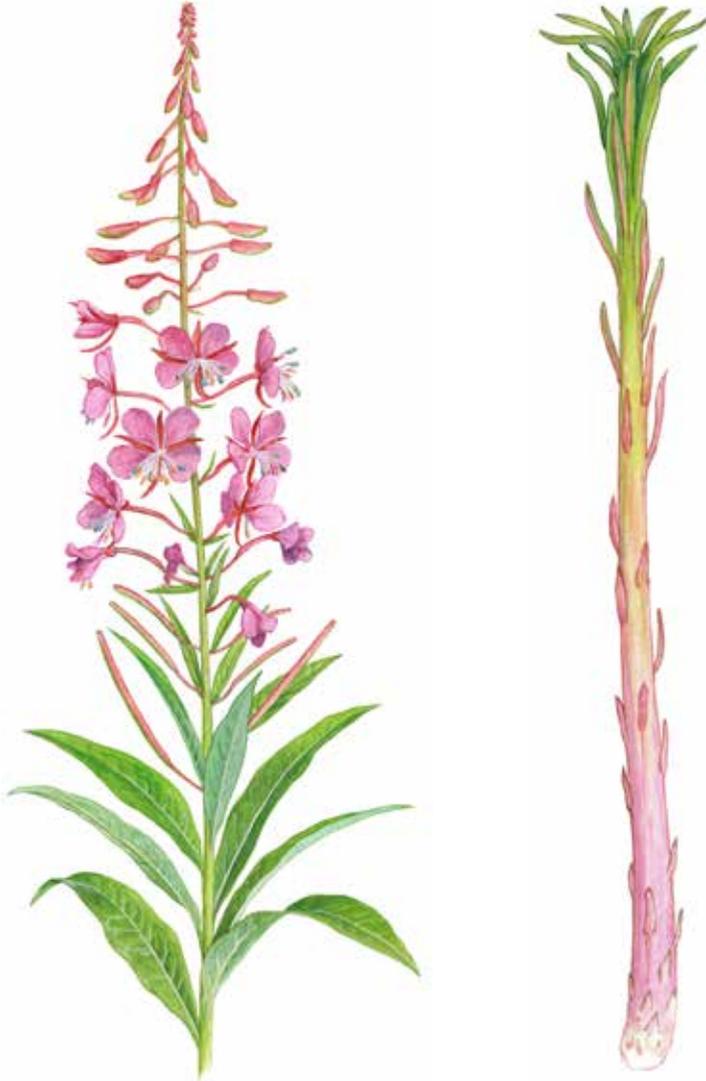


Edible parts: Young leaves and seeds. **Culinary tips:** Soups, pesto, smoothies, pie filling and bread-baking.

Geitrams

Chamerion angustifolium

Geitrams is a plant which thrives under all kinds of conditions and can be found on a roadside near you. The young shoots with a small tuft of leaves at the top can be prepared in the same way as asparagus. The leaves can be used fresh in salads or fermented and dried for tea. The flowers look great in salads, they can be candied for cake decoration and they produce a beautiful colour if you make a squash or concentrate of them.



Edible parts: Young stalks, leaves and flowers. **Culinary tips:** Young shoots fried in butter, pesto, in salads, tea, squash or concentrate.

Nyperoser

Rosa spp.

We have a number of wild, hip-bearing roses in Norway, all of which have edible flowers and hips. One species you can pick from as much as you like with a good conscience is called rynkerose (*Rosa rugosa*). This is an introduced species that we do not wish to see spreading in the Norwegian countryside. The lush petals lend a beautiful colour to rose sugar and rose jelly. The hips are large and particularly good for soups and purées, or you can dry them to make tea.



Edible parts: Flowers and hips. **Culinary tips:** Sugar, jelly, in fruit salad, purée, ketchup, soups, tea.

Meldestokk

Chenopodium album

Meldestokk is a nutritious, tasty plant often found along field edges or on bare ground. Strandmelde and tangmelde are in the same family and grow along the shoreline. The leaves can be blanched and frozen to be enjoyed throughout the year.



Edible parts: Leaves. **Culinary tips:** Soups, pesto, stews, omelettes and pie filling.

Engsyre

Rumex acetosa

Engsyre usually grows in meadows, pastures and woods. The taste of the leaves is fresh and acidic and makes a good replacement for lemon in some recipes. Calcium binds the oxalic acid that the plant contains, so a beneficial combination could be to finely chop the leaves and mix them in with other products such as cream or sour cream.



Edible parts: Leaves, young flowers as garnish. **Culinary tips:** Green sauce, herb butter, soups, herb filling for fish.

Løvetann

Taraxacum spp.

Løvetann is one of the spring's earliest plants and is really appreciated by bees. Maybe you have løvetann in your garden? If so, try putting a flower pot over the plant for a week to "bleach" the leaves: the lack of light means that the plant stops producing its normal bitter substances and acquires a milder taste. In southern Europe, løvetann leaves are frequently sold at vegetable markets. Why not try løvetann instead of cultivated salad stuffs from the supermarket?



Edible parts: Roots, young leaves, flower buds, stalk and flowers. **Culinary tips:** 'Capers' of the buds, oven-baked buds, in salads, green tagliatelle, jelly, syrup.

Tunbalderbrå

Matricaria discoidea

Tunbalderbrå weed commonly grows in courtyards and along field edges and pathways. The young flowers have a lovely flavour which can be enjoyed fresh in salads and tea. Freezing after a quick blanching is recommended for storage as drying tends to make them crumble.



Edible parts: Young flowers. **Culinary tips:** In salads, made into squash, refreshing iced tea, pickled flower-buds, can be infused in milk/cream as a basis for desserts, ice cream for example.

Gjøksyre

Oxalis acetosella

Gjøksyre grows in woods and has leaves reminiscent of clover, which is also edible. The green leaves have a fresh, acidic flavour and taste great in anything from fish dishes to desserts. The same can be said of the flowers.



Edible parts: Leaves and flowers. **Culinary tips:** Green sauce, in salads, herb butter, in sorbets and ice cream.

How do you use edible wild plants in the kitchen?

Foraging in the wild is only half the job. Here are a few tips for what you can make when you get home to your kitchen.

Herb salt

Mix 60% of the desired wild plants with 40% salt.

Finely chop the plants and give them a spin in a food processor with the salt.

Dry the mixture at 40 degrees on a tray in the oven, using a wooden spoon to hold the door open and emit the moisture, or use a food dehydrator if you have one. When the herb salt is completely dry, it can be broken up and given another whirl in the food processor to achieve the desired consistency. Simply exchange the salt for sugar if you want to make herb sugar instead. Both can be stored in a cupboard at room temperature.

Green sauce

Use a good handful of green wild plants and an oil of your choice, preferably sunflower or rapeseed oil. Finely chop the plants and pop them in a food processor with the oil until you have the desired consistency. The sauce is delicious mixed with pasta, as an accompaniment to other dishes or mixed with nuts and cheese for a really tasty pesto. The sauce is best used fresh but can be stored for a longer period as long as the oil covers the rest of the contents.

Wild squash or concentrate

Fill a bucket with flowers and pour in the juice of three lemons. Boil about 10 litres of water and taste your way to the desired amount of sugar – about 2 kilos is a good starting point. At the same time, pour in a whole sachet of citric acid powder (for sale in most grocery stores).

Pour the mixture over the flowers and allow it to stand covered for three days, stirring once a day. Strain and pour into sterile bottles. The squash will keep for about a week in a refrigerator but can be frozen down for use throughout the year.

Wild herbal tea

Press the desired leaves tightly together in a Kilner or Mason jar and put on the lid without using the rubber seal. Allow the leaves to sweat in their own juice at 40 degrees in the oven, a wooden spoon holding the door open, for one to two days. Then, if you don't have a food dehydrator, spread the leaves on a tea-towel and dry them in the same way. All that remains is to enjoy the world's best tea! Store in air-tight jars.

Herb butter

Finely chop your desired wild plants and blend them with a packet of butter which has softened at room temperature. Store in a refrigerator or freeze for later use.

Green soup

In a saucepan, fry a finely chopped onion, two large boiled potatoes and a few good handfuls of wild plants together in butter until the mixture begins to reduce. Then pour in a little over 1 litre of water (by all means use a good stock) and let it simmer for about 20 minutes. Give it a whizz with an immersion blender to achieve the desired consistency and add salt and pepper to taste.

Creamy wild plant soup

Melt a few dessert spoons of butter in a saucepan, whisk in a similar amount of flour and then pour 1 litre of stock over the mixture. Add a few good handfuls of finely chopped wild plants and simmer until they are tender. Add cream and season to taste.

Sustainable foraging

The species we have chosen to present in this brochure can be found across the country in viable populations. You can pick as much of them as you like. Generally speaking, there is a huge surplus of edible plants that we are far too poor at exploiting. You must be aware that there are certain populations of plants that cannot be harvested so heavily and that close to the cities there may be considerable pressure on particular species or areas. It is for this reason that the Norwegian Association for Mycology and Foraging puts ever increasing focus on sustainable foraging. You must always leave plenty for the next picker and the next season.

Poisonous plants and lookalikes

Beware that there are a number of poisonous plants in the Norwegian countryside. Some of these resemble edible plants. You should therefore never eat anything that you are not 100% sure of.

Knowledge about different species is the cornerstone of a successful foray. Learn to recognise some of the species in your neighbourhood and find out where they grow. You can then go back year after year.

You can expand the number of species you know by learning a few new ones every year. You can also look out for plants you don't know and try to identify them every time you are out on a trip. In this way you can build up your knowledge to become an experienced forager.

Join us for forays and courses!

A good way of learning more is to join the Norwegian Association for Mycology and Foraging on forays and courses. You can find an overview at soppognyttevekster.no/kalender.



Photo: Cathrine Johnsen



Photo: Wenche Eli Johnsen

If poisoning is suspected, call the Poison Information Centre:
22 59 13 00

helsenorge.no/Giftinformasjon/tema-planter-og-bar

Norwegian Association for Mycology and Foraging (NSNF)

NSNF is a volunteer association with local societies that span the entire country. We organize foraging trips and classes on how to use foraged plants and mushrooms. You will find information about ten useful plants you easily can forage on your own in this booklet. Join us on a foraging trip to learn more about wild plants you can eat.

NSNF has a training program for plant identification experts who specialize in foraging plants and toxic plants. They are also knowledgeable on historic plant use in Norway. You can be sure that they provide safe foraging advice on foraging trips.

Want to learn more?

Find a class or foraging trip where you live at soppognyttevekster.no/kalender

Check our online classes at soppognyttevekster.no/kurs

Join our association at soppognyttevekster.no/medlem



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