



FORAGING

Food for Free from Wild Plants!

The image of modern life being easy is a myth. Hunter gatherers often only worked for four hours a day: their time was their own, they worked for themselves, and had no mortgage. Much of the food sources they relied on have been destroyed by the clearance of the forests and the "development" of the land. There are still many sources of food available, if you know when and where to look.



Dangers of Foraging

There are many books and, recently, courses to show people what can be found. The best identification books have Dichotomous Keys that allow for reliable identification. A Dichotomous Key is a series of questions designed to eliminate all the wrong choices, and so lead to the correct answer (for example: is the cap of the mushroom red?) It is, perhaps, best to rely on a human guide who can answer questions and will know the possible look alike that may be poisonous. The risk of infection or disease is also a factor to consider.

- Mushrooms are one of the most commonly foraged items. Poisonous mushrooms are not common, but some look very like some of the edible varieties! It is best to know how to identify both the dangerous and the edible, in these cases. Mushrooms are also possibly risky because they can concentrate environmental poisons.
- Blackberries and blueberries are common in Irish hedgerows. It is best to collect them away from roadsides and the lead pollution.
- Samphire can be found near beaches.
- Seaweeds are also a good food if you can find an unpolluted source. (Click [here](#) for a book about them - *Extreme Greens: Understanding Seaweeds* by Sally McKenna).
- Some people collect watercress in the wild. A waterborne disease spread by rats, and sometimes cattle, Weil's Disease (Leptospirosis) can kill from 3 to 21 days, from one droplet on the mouth, and the symptoms are like the flu. The disease is common in still water, where watercress may also be found. The disease is most common in late summer and the autumn.



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Positives of Foraging

Now, having given you the dangers of foraging, let's talk of the pleasures:

- Enjoying time outside in the fresh air, with nature all around.
- The joy of discovering all sorts of interesting foods growing happily in the environment.
- Food shopping with no need for money or plastic!
- Fresh, organic food for free.



There are guidelines to follow when you are foraging to ensure sustainability of the plants, to make sure that you are not depriving the wildlife of its vital food sources, and for safety.

⇒ [Guidelines of Foraging for the Best Experience](#) ⇐



There are some lovely foods to be foraged in the Irish countryside, beyond the obvious blackberries and sloes. Some items include: gorse, sorrel, violet, myrtle, bilberry, ransoms (wild garlic)... to name just a few.

Once you come home with your basket full, what then? Salads, Pestos, Teas, Syrups, Wine, Tonics, the list is a long one.



Related Videos & Websites

- ⇒ [Forage Ireland Website](#) ⇐
- ⇒ [Stinging Nettles](#) ⇐ ⇒ [Grow, Cook, Eat](#) ⇐
- ⇒ [11 Plants to Identify](#) ⇐ ⇒ [Elderflower Cordial](#) ⇐

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