

EATING ORNAMENTALS



A GUIDE TO MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR
ORNAMENTAL PLANTING





FORAGING GUIDE FUCHSIA



Fuchsia is a common garden plant and one which grows as a hedgerow shrub in many parts of the country.

The shrubs are planted for their lovely, ornamental flowers but in fact berries and flowers of fuchsias can be eaten. Berries can vary in the way they taste and in general the blacker the berry, the sweeter the taste.

All fuchsias produce berries which are produced as the flowers on the plants mature and fall off. What is left behind is either a round or elliptical-shaped berry. Single-bloom fuchsias produce more fruit than double-bloom fuchsias.

The berries are rich in both vitamin C and antioxidants.

The berries can be used as any fruit berries, like this fuchsia berry jam

- Combine 500g sugar, 2 tablespoons of water and juice of a lemon in a pan
- Cook over low heat until sugar dissolves
- Set aside and allow to cool completely
- Add the berries gently, folding them into the mixture so as not to break up the berries too much
- Bring the mixture slowly to a boil
- Boil until the mixture will set when tested on a plate
- Seal in sterilised jars
- Allow to cool completely before eating

ABUNDANT BORDERS



FORAGING GUIDE HONEY BERRY



Honeyberry (*Lonicera caerulea*), also known as blue honeysuckle, sweetberry honeysuckle, fly honeysuckle and blue-berried honeysuckle. It is a perennial shrub, a non-climbing variety of honeysuckle.

The fruits are like blueberries in taste and looks, and can be eaten raw or used in jams and jellies. The fruits start round, like blueberries but if left a little longer on the tree, develop into bell-shaped berries. They are much sweeter at this stage; the round berries can be rather tart!

Like blueberries, they are high in antioxidants and vitamin C.

Honeyberry flowers late winter/early spring so it is a great plant to have in the garden for insects. The fact that they flower when there are few insects about can mean that the flowers don't get pollinated and berries don't set.

The berries are an early sign of spring as they come much earlier than blackcurrants and more usual garden berries. This is good for gardeners, but also for birds looking for early food sources!

The plants don't need an acidic soil so is a great choice where blueberries don't do well.

Honeyberries (known as Haskap berries in the US) are naturally high in pectin, and you can make a simple honeyberry jam with just fruit and sugar.

- Bring equal parts of honeyberries and sugar (by volume) to the boil in a small saucepan
- After about 10 minutes the bubbles will take on a glossy look and the texture will change. At this stage the jam has reached the setting point. You can test by putting a little on a cold plate
- Pour into jars



FORAGING GUIDE HONEYSUCKLE



Honeysuckle looks incredible, grows well in the Scottish Borders and, especially on sunny spring evenings, honeysuckle flowers smells amazing.

The flowers can be used to infuse a sweet, honey (obviously!) flavour into many dishes.

Honeysuckle is easy to identify and to find; in woodland and along hedgerows, winding itself around shrubs and trees for support. It is also popular in gardens.

You only need a few flowers to get the lovely honey taste into teas, food and drinks.

- Infuse in hot water to make a refreshing tea,
- Use the infusion in sorbets, cordials, jams and jellies.
- Make simple syrup with honeysuckle flowers.

The syrup can then be used to make a vinaigrette, added to gin, fizzy water or even champagne! The syrup is also great for dry throats.

To make a syrup:

1. Add water (2 cups) and honeysuckle flowers (1 cup) to a small saucepan and bring to the boil. Turn down the heat and simmer until liquid has reduced by half.
2. Strain the flowers from the liquid.
3. Add sugar (1 cup) to the flower water and stir until the sugar is completely dissolved.
4. Pour the syrup into a glass jar. The syrup should last up to 6 months



FORAGING GUIDE LADY'S MANTLE



Lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*) is an attractive perennial plant which grows well in the Scotland. It has soft grey-green foliage with scalloped-shaped leaves. In late spring and early summer, the plant produces blooms of tiny yellow flowers.

The name comes from an ancient legend of it being used to adorn the Virgin Mary, or that the leaves resemble the shape of her cloak.

The young leaves of Lady's Mantle are edible both raw and cooked. Young leaves, particularly early in the growing season, are good in salads. The larger, older leaves tend to be somewhat hairy which makes eating raw unpalatable.

Dried leaves are also used as a tea for which they are used commercially.

Lady's mantle has a long history of herbal use.

The plant's Latin name is ***alchemilla*** and related to the word "alchemy". Historically, it was thought that the water droplets on the leaves were the purest form of water and that they might even turn base metals into gold.

Herbalists prescribe it for a variety of conditions. It is an anti-inflammatory and an astringent, and has properties that are good for regulating menstruation. It is often used in late pregnancy to help strengthen the uterus, usually taken as a tea made from the flowers.



FORAGING GUIDE SUNFLOWERS



Sunflowers seeds are a great addition to healthy meals and snacks but in fact sunflowers are an entirely edible plant. From root to leaf, sprout to stalk, you can use your sunflowers to make everything from salads to tea.

Starting at the roots, those of the sunchoke (Jerusalem artichoke) can be roasted, fried, shredded, steamed, mashed with potatoes, marinated or even chopped raw and added into salads.

The leaves can be used as in salad or boiled and used like spinach. Leaves can be sprinkled with oil and salt and baked like kale crisps.

Sunflower leaves, brewed alone or together with the flower petals, make an earthy tea.

Sunflower add a dash of colour to salads and garnishes.

A sunflower is ready to have its seeds eaten when the disk flowers on the back of the plant have turned from green to yellow. You can eat them raw, or soak them over night in a salt water and then roast them.

If you leave the seeds to sprout (on wet blotting paper or in a specialist sprouter), the shoots have a slight nuttiness but with more of a fresh flavour.

ABUNDANT BORDERS



FORAGING GUIDE AUTUMN OLIVE



The berries of autumn olive, (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), are edible. The berries are produced in abundance and are easy to harvest, but it may not form fruit as far north as Scotland.

It is a beautiful, elegant tree with copious spring blossom. It is a nitrogen fixing tree, so can help to improve poor soil. When grown in orchards, it can increase yields of adjacent fruit trees by up to 10%. It has also been shown as a great companion plant for Walnut trees.

It is very vigorous and can easily shade out any underplanting so do be careful where you plant it. In the USA, where it was introduced as a roadside/ windbreak shrub, it is now considered an invasive, undesirable species due to its vigorous nature.

In the UK Autumn Olive has been growing in parks and gardens for 200 years without any such problem.

If you do get berries, then they can be made into jams, jellies, fruit sauces Or enjoyed raw.



FORAGING GUIDE SORREL

The name sorrel is used to describe several related plants.

The name comes from the French for 'sour' (sœur), and it is true that the leaves, which are the edible part of the plant, have a sharp acidity. If you look on line for the names of the different varieties you will quickly find that there is a degree of overlap, with some sites assigning different common names to different physical forms. I am going with the names assigned by Permaculture Teacher Graham Bell.



Common Sorrel (also known as Garden Sorrel, Narrow Leaved Dock and Spinach Dock) has large, narrow, bright-green, arrow-shaped leaves which have a smooth, crisp texture.

The leaves can be eaten raw in salads, younger smaller leaves are the best, or cooked in soups, purées and stuffings and sorrel goes particularly well with fish and egg dishes.



French Sorrel has an even more citrus flavour and the leaves add a tang to salads.



Buckler Leaf Sorrel, which I know as Lemon Sorrel, has tiny, shield-shaped leaves that are good in a mixed green salad or as a garnish. Unsurprisingly, the leaves have a definite lemony taste.



Red Veined Sorrel, which I know as Ruby Sorrel or Bloody Dock. This is the least acidic of the sorrels and is great in salads, adding colour as well as taste.

While sorrel is a great addition to salads it shouldn't be eaten in large quantities as it contains a high amount of oxalic acid.



FORAGING GUIDE ROSES



Roses are a traditional country garden favourite but the flowers and hips are edible.

Roses grow best in fertile, well-drained soils in a sunny position. They do best with regular mulching and feeding. Roses do well in waterlogged soil and few flowers are produced if the plant is grown in the shade.

Rose petals can be added to salads to add colour, flavour and aroma. The darker varieties tend to have the most flavour.

To dry:

- Spread petals in a single layer over a clean tea towel. Place in a warm and dry room until dry to the touch. This will take about 3-5 days depending on weather
- Petals can also be oven dried, at 100°C

Making Rosewater:

- Remove petals and rinse to remove bugs and dust
- Put a bowl in the centre of a saucepan and place petals AROUND the bowl
- Add enough water to cover the rose petals but do not put water in the bowl
- Bring to boil then reduce to a simmer
- Put lid on pan UPSIDE DOWN and put ice cubes in the upturned lid
- The water will condense in the bowl inside the pan, the ice helps to keep the lid cooled and aids condensation
- After 30 mins there should be a good amount of rosewater in the bowl
- Allow bowl to cool then decant the water into bottles. Store in fridge til needed.

Rose hips are the fruiting body of the rose and all rosehips are edible. The tastiest ones to collect are not from cultivated varieties but from the Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*). Rosehips are a great source of Vitamin C and rosehip syrup is a great way to get vitamins throughout the winter.

- Bring 1.5l water to the boil
- Mince (finely chop) 1kg Rosehips and add to water
- Bring to boil then remove from heat. Leave to infuse for 15 minutes
- Strain through a jelly bag until dry
- Return pulp to saucepan and add 0.75l boiling water. Leave for 10 minutes
- Strain. Discard pulp
- Mix the two juices and return to saucepan and add 0.5kg sugar
- Boil for 5 minutes, cool and bottle