



Big Green Idea Sheet: A Forager's Code and Wild Greens

Or how to be safe, legal and ethical with free food

Healthy plants: avoid collecting diseased plants or ones with insect infestations.

Away from roads: and other sources of pollution such as weedkiller sprayed areas in gardens and field margins.

Protect your hands, face and arms: many of the best food plants sting or have prickles.

Permission from land owners: Ask before you enter private land! The local pub landlord or village shop owner can usually point you in the right direction.

Identify the plant positively: Never eat anything you cannot definitely identify. Sometimes you may need to collect the whole plant in order to do this. Never put unidentified plants in the same container as those you intend to eat.

Endangered or protected plant species should never be collected. It is your responsibility to find out what these are. Never pick from protected places such as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) – rare or endangered bird, animal or insect species may rely on common food plants located there.

Regenerate the site by leaving a few healthy specimens untouched to complete their life cycle, and only take what you know you can use.

Cut-and-Come-Again Nettles

The stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) is such a useful food plant for humans as well as insects that it deserves a place in every garden! They taste best from early spring until April when the flowers start to appear. To get a second crop of tasty young shoots to enjoy right up to midsummer, simply cut the old stems back to ground level and compost them, then water the patch thoroughly. Remember to leave a few stems in a sunny location uncut for butterflies, hoverflies and other beneficial aphid-eating insects.

Free Plan Food

Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*) is a great source of nutrient-rich plant food for your plants and vegetables. Cut the stems back after flowering and stuff them into an old pillowcase or cloth bag. Tie up loosely, place it in a bucket of water and leave in a shady place for a few weeks. The resulting brown liquid can be used in a 1:10 dilution for all your garden plants. The evil-smelling sludge of rotted comfrey leaves can be put on the compost heap, while the new comfrey leaf growth is a delicious wild food for humans!

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Follow these guidelines and be a HAPPIER forager.

Find out more: To find out more about the Big Green Idea, and to share your ideas and experiences, visit www.itsnoteasybeinggreen.org