

Lemon Balm (*melissa officinalis*)



Description: This perennial herb grows in clumps up to 60cm tall and looks somewhat like the stinging nettle. The delicate leaves exude a distinct lemon aroma when rubbed.

Where: Moist ditches, wastelands, often interspersed with mint or nettles

When: The plant dies back in winter. Leaves can be used any time between spring and autumn.

Culinary uses: A bunch of leaves added in salads add a pleasant lemon flavour. Add to a soup or stew at the end of the cooking process. Stuff a whole bunch into a fish when roasting. A pesto (see recipe) can be made from the leaves or it can be added to a herb butter. Finally it makes a pleasant tasting tea and a sprig can be added to a cold summer drink.

Medicinal uses: It is traditionally known to have a calming effect on the nerves taken as a tea. It raises the spirits when feeling a little depressed. It is effective in the treatment of cold sores. It also relieves fevers and colds. Externally it is used to treat insect bites as well as being an insect repellent.

Recipe: Lemon balm pesto: Combine a generous handful of fresh lemon balm leaves with 4 cloves of garlic and a good helping of good olive oil in a food processor. Serve with spaghetti.

Chicken Breast on a Bed of Wild Herbs with Roast Potato and Fennel: In the centre of an oiled fireproof dish arrange whole bunches of wild herbs such as lemon balm, fennel greens and oregano. Lay chicken breast on top, arrange cubed potatoes and roughly chopped fennel bulb around the edge and sprinkle everything with chopped wild chives and olive oil. Season and bake for 40 minutes until done.

Link:

<http://lemonbalm.org/>

Lettuce, Wild (*Lactuca*)



Description: There are a bewildering number of relations to our common cultivated lettuce growing in the wild, in fact there are some 100 species. Amongst the most common are *L. viminea*, which looks very much like the sow thistle and Prickly Lettuce (*L. serriola*). *L. virosa* is valued for its medicinal properties. Heights and

appearance vary considerably and a future project might be a guide to wild lettuces. The thing they all have in common are that they form heads in panicles of yellow, brown or purple flowers in ray florets. Most are edible, although more bitter than the cultivated varieties, some in fact too bitter to be palatable.

Where: Most like open grasslands, walls or rock crevices.

When: Usually best in spring.

Culinary uses: Eat raw in salads or some varieties can be cooked as a potherb.

Medicinal uses: As bitter herbs they all have a positive effect on the digestion and act as a tonic. The latex of *L. virosa* has a sedative and mildly narcotic effect and is an aid to combat insomnia.

Caution: Some of the more bitter varieties, including *L. virosa* contain low levels of toxins and should be used with caution and in moderation.



Link: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lactuca>

Locust, Black (*robinia pseudacacia*)



Description: This fast growing, at times invasive, deciduous tree is native to North America, but is now naturalised all over Europe. It grows to a height of 25m. The young stems and branches arm themselves with 2-3cm long, needle-sharp thorns. The foliage is arranged in pairs of simple oval shape. The grape-like white flower-bunches fill the air around them with a sweet fragrance. It is also sometimes known as False Acacia.

Where: Open woodlands

When: The flowers in spring and the seeds and young pods in summer.

Culinary uses: In Italy and France the flowers are eaten as fritters. The seeds and young pods can be boiled like peas. In fact they must be cooked, see notes on caution.

Medicinal uses: Cooked flowers are eaten as a treatment for eye ailments. They also contain an anti-tumour compound. The leaf juice inhibits viruses.

Caution: All parts of the plant except the flower are toxic. The toxin is broken down by heat, so cooked seeds and pods are safe to eat.

Link:

<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Robinia+pseudoacacia>

Mallow (*malva*)

Description: A genus of about 25-30 species, which are all edible. They have the characteristic palmate lobed leaves in common as well as the mauve flowers (the name of the colour comes from the French name for the plant) with typically 5 petals. The seeds are sometimes known as cheeses because of their round flat shapes. The roots of the sub-species marshmallow were once used to make the popular confectionary.





Where: Waste-grounds, moist ditches, along pathways and hedgerows. *M. sylvestris* is common all over Europe.

When: Spring through to autumn

Culinary uses: Young leaves and flowers can be added raw to salads. Leaves cooked make a great addition to soups, where they act as a thickener. The seeds can be nibbled raw as a snack.

Medicinal uses: The whole plant is rich in mucus and a tea made from the leaves, flowers and/or the roots relieves coughs and other chest complaints. The leaves make a good laxative for children and has a calming effect on stomach ulcers. The leaves and flowers can be used as a poultice on bruises, burns, inflammations and insect bites.

Recipe: Malokhia Egyptian Soup: This is my version of this popular recipe. Crush some garlic, whole coriander seeds and dried chillies to taste together and heat gently in some olive oil for about a minute until the aromas are released. Add a couple of handfuls of finely chopped mallow leaves, stir and then add about a litre of chicken stock. Simmer for 10 minutes, season to taste and serve over some rice. Other vegetables of your choice can be added together with the mallow.

Caution: Avoid if grown on cultivated land which may have had inorganic nitrogen fertiliser added

Link:

<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Malva+sylvestris>

Marigold, Field (*calendula arvensis*)

Description: A low growing pretty annual flower. It grows to about 15cm in height and has lance-shaped leaves from a slender, hairy stem. The up to 4cm single flower heads are bright yellow-orange.



Where: Native to Southern Europe, but found further north as a garden escapee, it is common on sunny banks, along waysides and in vineyards.

When: Spring to summer

Culinary uses: The leaves and young shoots can be eaten raw or cooked. They are rich in vitamins and minerals. The immature flower buds can be pickled like capers.

Medicinal uses: Field Marigold has similar properties to Pot Marigold and has versatile uses in herbal medicine. Externally it is used to heal a variety of skin problems as well as cuts, sprains, stings, wounds, sore eyes and varicose veins. It also has similar properties to Arnica. Internally it is used as a de-toxifying herb and to treat fevers and chronic infections.

Recipe: Marigold Buds under Oil: Bring 1l of white wine vinegar and 1l of white wine to the boil and add some salt. Add 1 kg of cleaned marigold buds (use dandelion buds as an alternative or in combination) in handful batches to the boiling mixture for a minute at a time and fish out with slotted spoon and dry off on some kitchen paper. Slice 4-5 cloves of garlic and distribute in glass jars. Pack in cooked buds and top up with good quality olive oil. Seal and consume as an antipasto or condiment. It will keep like this for up to a year.

Marigold Skin Healing Cream: Heat 150g dried marigold flower heads with 500g lard until melted and well combined. Leave to cool and rest for 3 days. Heat again and filter hot through muslin. Apply to most skin condition and light injuries.

Link:

<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Calendula+arvensis>

Marjoram and Oregano (*origanum majorana*, *o. vulgare*)



Description: These two herbs are so closely related that they can be described together. In appearance they differ in that marjoram has small, grey-greenish leaves, whilst oregano has firmer, slightly larger, light green leaves. Marjoram is a compact, upright, shrubby plant up to 45cm tall, whereas oregano has a dense, spreading habit and grows up to 60cm tall. Most sources will tell you that oregano has a stronger flavour and aroma, however the sub-variety sweet marjoram is sweeter and spicier than both pot marjoram and oregano. Both leaves and dried flower heads are used.

Where: On meadows, wastelands and along pathways.

When: Summer

Culinary uses: Widely used as flavouring in salads, stews, pasta sauces, pizza and generally in Mediterranean cooking. A herbal tea can be made from either variety. They are used in herb mixtures such as Bouquet Garni or Herbes de Provence.

Medicinal uses: A tea made from marjoram aids digestion and relieves flatulence. Both marjoram and oregano teas help relieve the symptoms of colds and coughs, headaches and menstrual pains. Leaves of both are anti-septic and can be applied externally to swellings, rheumatism and stiff necks.

Link:

<http://www.herbsociety.org/factsheets/oregano.pdf>

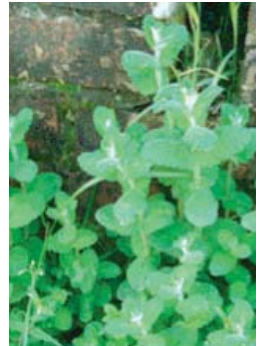
Mint (*mentha*)

Description: The mints are a versatile family coming in a great variety of colours, textures, scents and tastes. What they all have in common is the basic leaf shape and all are highly aromatic. They are perennial but mostly die back in the winter

Where: Most prefer moist, semi-shaded locations. They are common throughout Europe.

When: Spring to autumn

Culinary uses: Mint is one of the best known and versatile herbs. Here just some of the uses: a mint sauce for meat dishes, some fresh chopped mint on new potatoes, on salads, Greek style yoghurt and mint sauce, tea, flavouring sweet dishes, mint ice-cream, the list goes on.



Medicinal uses: Mint aids digestion. A cup of mint tea after a meal assists those suffering from indigestion. It has anti-oxidant properties and acts as a cancer preventative. A tea relieves symptoms of cold and flu. Its a mild sedative and calms frayed

nerves. It refreshes bad breath. Macerated stems are used as a poultice on bruises and sprains. It is antiseptic.

Recipe: Tsatsiki: Blend together natural, Greek style yoghurt with finely chopped mint, garlic, grated cucumber and a squirt of lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper and serve as a dip, on potatoes or inside a kebab.

Caution: Pennyroyal, which is a low growing, small leafed variety of mint, has been known to cause abortions and can be damaging to the liver if taken in large quantities.

Link:

<http://www.helpwithcooking.com/herb-guide/mint.html>

Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*)



Description: A perennial herbaceous weed which spreads aggressively on cultivated ground. From a woody root system it reaches an average height of 1.5m on a reddish stem with pointy serrated leaves which are dark green on the upper side and display a whitish downy underside. When rubbed it gives off a warm herbal aroma reminiscent of camphor or chrysanthemums. Alternative common names include Felon Herb or St. John's plant.

Where: Common all over temperate Europe along waysides, as a weed on cultivated land, hedge banks and waste grounds.

When: Spring to summer before flowering. Roots in late summer to early autumn.

Culinary uses: Young leaves added in small quantities to fatty foods, such as eel, duck, goose or mutton, are said to aid digestion and add a bitter-aromatic note. Older leaves become quite unpleasantly bitter. In Germany it is traditionally added to goose (see recipe). It is sometimes used in Chinese, Japanese and Korean cooking. In Korea it is added to rice dumplings to give them their green colour.

Medicinal uses: Use 1-2 tsp of dried leaves per cup to make a tea taken against indigestion. This can also be used to relieve menstrual problems



and combat intestinal worms. The dried roots harvested in late summer / autumn are even more effective. The compressed dried leaves and roots are also used in the Chinese medicine therapy of moxibustion. A leaf placed inside the shoe is said to help sore feet.

Recipe: Goose with apple and mugwort stuffing: Clean and gut one whole goose and rub with salt and pepper. Mix together 2 chopped apples, 2 chopped onions and a tablespoon of finely chopped mugwort. Stuff the mixture into the cavity and cook in a covered casserole pan for 90 minutes, occasionally basting it with beer and some of the cooking juices.

Caution: Mugwort contains thujone, which is toxic if consumed regularly and in large quantities. Consume with moderation and it should be avoided by pregnant women.

Link:

<http://www.botanical.com/botanical/mgmh/m/mugwor61.html>

Mullein (*verbascum densiflorum*)

Description: The *verbascum* genus are also known as velvet plants due to the furry texture of their leaves. They initially form a rosette of leaves at ground level and subsequently sending up tall yellow flowers up to 1.5m tall.

Where: Dry, sunny locations along pathways and on quarries preferring chalky soils.

When: Summer

Culinary uses: Flowers can be used to flavour liqueurs.



Medicinal uses: A tea made from the flowers as well as fennel seeds, mallow and sweet violets to help clear chest infections and raspy coughs. It is used in herbal tobaccos for the same purpose. Leaves and flowers contain skin softening mucilage and can be used to reduce eczema and help



heal wounds. The seed oil soothes chilblains and chapped skin. Woolly leaves can be used as emergency wound dressing. An infusion of the flowers in olive oil is used to treat ear infections. According to one source it also cures the use of evil language and the thinking of evil thoughts. I cannot vouch for the latter uses.

Caution: For internal use strain tea through a coffee filter to remove fine hairs which are an irritant.

Link: http://www.ashtreepublishing.com/Book_City_Herbal_Mullen.htm

Mustard, Black (*brassica nigra*)

Description: An annual member of the cabbage family with rough leaves covered in small hair. The flower emerges on stems up to 1.5m tall and consists of 4 small yellow petals. Seeds appear later in up to 2cm long pods.



Where: Sunny locations on poor soils often near the sea.

When: Spring to summer

Culinary uses: Leaves can be finely chopped and used to add a spicy flavour to salads or cooked as a potherb. Immature flowering stems can be cooked like broccoli. The seeds are popular in Indian cooking. Usually they are added to hot oil before anything else and allowed to ‘pop’ to release all their aromas and flavours. It’s also used in pickling spice (see juniper).

Medicinal uses: Hot water poured on bruised seeds makes a stimulant foot bath, good for colds and headaches. The seed is also used internally as an appetizer, digestive, diuretic, emetic and tonic. A decoction of the seeds is used in the treatment of indurations of the liver and spleen.

Link:

<http://www.naturalmedicinalherbs.net/herbs/b/brassica-nigra=black-mustard.php>

Mustard, Garlic (*alliaria petiolata*)



Description: A biennial flowering plant in the mustard family growing up to 1 metre tall with heart shaped slightly wrinkled leaves, delicate clusters of white flowers which turn into small upright fruits that release seeds in mid-summer. Also known as Jack-by-the-hedge. When crushed all parts of the plant have a distinct aroma which is a cross between mustard and garlic.

Where: Common along damp hedgerows and woodland edges.

When: Spring for the leaves and flowers, summer for the seeds.

Culinary uses: The young leaves and flowers give salad an agreeable spicy edge. The chopped leaves mixed with some cream cheese make a delicious sandwich filling. Cooked they can be added to spring soups and go particularly well with fresh peas. A white herb sauce with garlic mustard is great on top of new potatoes. Crush the seeds with salt as a condiment.

Medicinal uses: Consuming garlic mustard aids digestion. It is rich in vitamin C. A decoction is used in the treatment of bronchitis and to promote sweating. The roots are also used externally, heated in oil and then applied to the chest against chest complaints. Externally they are used as a poultice on ulcers and to relieve itching and bites.

Recipe: Garlic Mustard Sauce: Make a béchamel sauce by melting some butter over a low heat. Stir in flour and stir continuously for a minute or so. Gradually add milk, always stirring, until a rich creamy consistency is achieved. Season with salt, pepper and nutmeg and add a good handful of chopped garlic mustard leaves. Leave to infuse for a minute and serve over new potatoes or on fish.

Link:

<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Alliaria+petiolata>

Myrtle, Common (*myrtus communis*)



Description: An evergreen shrub growing up to 5m tall with simple shiny, almost leathery leaves displaying small white flowers in the spring and dark purple-blue berries in late autumn the size of a large pea containing several seeds. All parts of the plant are highly aromatic.

Where: Sunny hedges and woodland edges around the Mediterranean.

When: Leaves all year, flowers in spring and berries in late autumn.

Culinary uses: Most famously used as ingredient for mirto liqueur from Sardinia or Corsica. Mirto Rosso is made from the berries, whilst the leaves make Mirto Bianco. Flowers can be added to salads. Leaves used to flavour meat dishes and casseroles in the same way as bay leaf. The berries can be eaten raw or cooked into a jam (see recipe under autumn olive). The dried berries are also used as a flavouring in a similar way to juniper berries. A tasty tea can be made from dried leaves and berries.

Medicinal uses: The tea or a steam bath is excellent to clear the airways and a safe way to treat sinusitis, bronchial congestion and dry coughs. The essential oil is used in treating cold sores. It has a great anti-bacterial action making it effective in the treatment of urinary infections, digestive problems and vaginal discharge. Externally it is used to treat acne, gum infections and haemorrhoids.

Link:

<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Myrtus+communis>

Navelwort (*umbilicus rupestris*)



Description: Also known as wall-pennywort, named for its shape resembling a human navel. A perennial succulent plant up to about 5cm in diameter, rarely up to 10cm. The flowers appear in summer on little tightly clustered fleshy stems.

Where: On walls and rock crevices all over Europe to as far north as Scotland and as far south as North Africa.

When: Best in early spring

Culinary uses: They are delicious and refreshing popped straight into the mouth off the wall with their crunchy texture. They make a good addition to the salad bowl. By summer when they start turning a tinge of red they become unpleasantly bitter.

Medicinal uses: They have a cooling effect whichever way they are used. Externally as a poultice they offer relief from burns, inflamed areas of the skin, acne and piles. Internally the juice is diuretic and helps with infections of the liver and spleen. The juice is also said to relieve earaches. The plant has a folk reputation to help combat epilepsy, but I have not noticed any improvements having used it on an epilepsy patient.

Link:

<http://pathtoselfsufficiency.blogspot.com/2012/02/navel-wort.html>

Nettle, Red Dead (*lamium purpureum*)



Description: An annual, low growing nettle variety, growing only up to 25cm, with soft downy, non-stinging leaves with a purplish-red tinge on the tip of the plant and delicate light purple flowers.

Where: Moist ditches and meadows everywhere.

When: summer

Culinary uses: Young leaves and shoots raw in salads or cooked as a potherb. The flavour is somewhat bland and is therefore best mixed with other greens.

Medicinal uses: Bruised fresh leaves can be applied externally to cuts and bruises

Link:

<http://www.arthurleej.com/a-deadnettle.html>

Nettle, Stinging (*urtica dioica*)



Description: One of the most recognised and common weeds. It is a coarse perennial growing in clumps from rhizomes. The serrated leaves have stinging hairs and it displays tiny green flowers in summer. Needless to say, leaves are best harvested using gloves.

Where: Everywhere alongside paths, waste-grounds and ditches, preferring a slightly alkaline soil.

When: Almost all year.

Culinary uses: Young leaves only can be cooked as a potherb and make an excellent addition to a soup. Nettle leaves are very nutritious and contain high concentrations of iron as well as other vitamins and minerals. A warming tea can be brewed from the dried leaves. To add flavour add to China tea. The stinging effect is neutralised by heat or thorough drying.

Medicinal uses: Nettles are valuable as a blood purifier and cleansing tonic. An infusion helps treat internal bleeding, anaemia, excessive menstrual bleeding, arthritis and rheumatism. It stimulates circulation and clears uric acid. It also reverses prostate enlargement. Externally it is used in the treatment of eczema and haemorrhoids.

Caution: Avoid old leaves as they can be an irritant to the kidneys if eaten.

Link:

<http://www.ageless.co.za/herb-stinging-nettle.htm>

Nettle, White Dead (*lamium album*)



Description: This perennial non-stinging nettle's long rhizomes bear erect stems, up to 60cm in height, that are square and hollow, with opposite pairs of bright green leaves and clusters of tubular white flowers.

Where: Waste grounds, damp ditches, meadows, roadsides.

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When: Most of the year, but leaves best used in spring.

Culinary uses: Young leaves raw in salads. Leaves cooked as a potherb. A tea can be obtained from the flowers.

Medicinal uses: It narrows blood vessels and is thus used in the treatment of excessive menstrual bleeding. It is generally regarded as a tonic for the reproductive organs. Dried leaves sniffed can stop nose bleeds. An infusion is effective in the treatment of kidney, bladder and prostate complaints as well as diarrhoea. Externally it can be applied to piles and haemorrhoids.

Link:

<http://www.naturalmedicinalherbs.net/herbs/l/lamium-album=white-dead-nettle.php>

Oak (*quercus*)



Description: There are some 600 species of oak trees. They can be deciduous or evergreen and are common all over the northern hemisphere. Most species can be recognised by the classic lobed leaf shape and the acorn fruit born in autumn. *Q. alba* the white oak, is probably the most common oak in Europe

Where: Woodlands

When: Autumn for the seeds

Culinary uses: The seeds (acorns) of most species are to a greater or lesser extent decidedly high in tannins and therefore bitter. For consumption they should first be dried, then ground and 'leached' This is achieved by thoroughly washing and soaking them in water. Boiling and changing the water several times also has that effect, however many of the useful minerals are also lost. Treated like this it can be used as a flour substitute. Try making bread with part acorn flour. Simply roasting and grinding the seeds makes for a good coffee substitute. Young leaves make an interesting country wine.

Medicinal uses: The seed and bark is used for its antiseptic and astringent qualities. The bark boiled and the liquid drunk is used in the treatment of diarrhoea, fevers, coughs and colds, asthma and lost voice. The bark chewed helps mouth sores. Externally the bark can be used as a wash for burns, rashes, bruises, ulcers and as a vaginal douche.

Link:

<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Quercus+alba>

Old Man's Beard (*clematis vitalba*)



Description: Also known as Traveller's Joy, it is a perennial, deciduous climbing shrub growing up to 15 metres with branched grooved stems, forming greeny-white, scented, flowers, which go fluffy giving it its common name of Old Man's Beard.

Where: Woodland edges and hedgerows.

When: Early spring for the young shoots

Culinary uses: Only the outer tips of young shoots are edible and can be eaten cooked like hop shoots or asparagus.

Medicinal uses: The juice of the plant applied to the inside of the nostrils is used to relieve migraine attacks, but can also destroy mucous membranes.



Caution: All parts of this plant are poisonous, however the toxicity is dissipated by cooking or drying. Only use the very tips of the young shoots and don't over-indulge.

Link:

<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Clematis+vitalba>

Orach, Hastate or Halberd-Leaved (*Atriplex hastata*)



Description: An annual erect plant growing up to 80cm tall with almost triangular leaves.

Where: Near the coast, on dunes above the tide mark, mostly northern and Eastern Europe. **It is protected in some places.**

When: Spring for the leaves

Culinary uses: The leaves make an acceptable spinach substitute. The dried seeds ground to a flour can be added to bread, but they are very fiddly.

Medicinal uses: None known.

Link:

<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Atriplex+hastata>

Ox-tongue, Bristly (*Picris echioides*)

Description: An annual or biennial weed with a rosette of lanceolate leaves up to 20cm long at ground level from which a flower stem of up to 90cm emerges with yellow dandelion-like flower heads. Both the leaves and stem are distinctly bristly.



Where: Waste grounds and meadows in Southern Europe, but also naturalised further north.

When: spring and summer.

Culinary uses: Young leaves cooked and mixed with other greens as they are somewhat bitter.

Medicinal uses: None known

Link:

<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Picris+echioides>

Parsley, Wild or Cow (*anthriscus sylvestris*)



Description: A common roadside perennial herb growing up to 1.2m tall. The leaves look like common flat-leafed parsley, but they do not emit much aroma unlike the cultivated variety. However, the long, tapering roots smell strongly of parsley. The small white umbellate flowers appear in summer.

Where: Roadsides and open fields and meadows, also in shady locations.

When: Spring to autumn.

Culinary uses: The leaves can be used raw, but develop more flavour when cooked in a stew or casserole. The roots have more flavour and can be cooked as a vegetable or to impart flavour to a stew.

Medicinal uses: Soak the roots in rice water for several days and then cook with other vegetables as a tonic for general weakness.

Caution: Do not confuse with fool's parsley *aethusa cynapium* or poison hemlock *conium maculatum*, which are both poisonous and can cause pain, confusion of vision and vomiting. The leaves of fool's parsley are finer and more delicate to those of true parsley, whilst hemlock's lower stem is usually spotted or streaked red or purple and when crushed the leaves and roots emit a rank, unpleasant smell.



Link:

<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Anthriscus+sylvestris>

Pellitory of the Wall (*parietaria officinalis*)



Description: This is one of those plants I walked past hundreds of times before I realised how useful it was. It is a perennial member of the nettle family it has smaller leaves than the stinging nettle growing off red stalks creeping along walls. The flowers are similarly inconspicuous to those of the stinging nettle.



Where: Mainly in cracks along old stone walls all over Europe except Britain and Iberia.

When: Spring to summer.

Culinary uses: The leaves and young shoots make an excellent vegetable added to soups (see recipe), mashed potato or a risotto.

Medicinal uses: This plant has long been valued as an excellent diuretic, increasing urine production to clear the system. Combined with stinging nettle the effect is increased. Drink an infusion of 2 tablespoons of dried herb per litre of water 3 times a day or make an infusion and take 40 drops three times a day. This is helpful to combat metabolic illnesses, including obesity, diabetes and cellulites, rheumatic illnesses, such as gout and arthritis, illnesses of the urinary tract, including gallstones and kidney stones as well as renal inflammations and cystitis and illnesses of the circulatory system, such as high blood pressure and water retention. Externally is used as a disinfectant wound dressing.

Recipe: Pellitory of the Wall Soup: Boil a large bunch of leaves for some 10 minutes in salted water. Drain and puree. In a separate pan heat up a little butter, add 50g of flour and 400ml of milk and bring to the boil slowly. Add the pureed Pellitory and season to taste.

Caution: The pollen are responsible for symptoms for many hay fever sufferers. If you have a known allergy, avoid contact with the flowering plant.

Link:

<http://www.botanical-online.com/medicinalsparietariaangles.htm>

Periwinkle, Greater (*vinca major*)

Description: This perennial shrub-like creeping vine grows up to 50cm tall and individual plants can cover an area of up to 2m in diameter as groundcover. The 5cm long leaves are pointy with a shiny surface and the flowers with their 5 petals are amongst the truest blue shade along with borage flowers. This plant is only of passing interest for the forager for its medicinal properties.



Where: Hedgerows and the edges of cultivated land. Native to southern Europe but naturalised in other areas too including Britain.

When: Spring to autumn.

Culinary uses: None

Medicinal uses: Internally it is used to reduce menstrual bleeding. It is given to treat ulcers and sore throats and to reduce blood pressure. Externally it is also used as a wound herb and to stem a nose bleed. It should be administered by a qualified herbalist.

Caution: Large doses of this plant are poisonous.

Link:

<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Vinca+major>

Pigweed (*amaranthus albus*)

Description: Pigweed is one of approximately 60 species of the amaranth genus, all of them are edible. It is one of my favourite plants as it is the anarchist of the plant world. It is resistant to most weed killers throwing a spanner in the works of the GM crop lobby. Genetically modified food crops are bred to resist their own brand weed killer, but they have not found one that would kill pigweed whilst sparing the food crops. In addition the Incas and Aztecs used it as major food crop for both its seeds and leaves.



The conquering Spaniards banned it though because the seeds were baked to cakes with some human blood for religious rituals, which the Spaniards did not approve of. The various members of the amaranth vary considerably in appearance. Pigweed, the most common, is an annual growing up to 1.5m tall with matt, light green leaves, usually with a whitish pattern on it. The flower is upright, candle-like or feathery, containing masses of small black seeds. Other species can vary considerably in colour and seed size.



Where: Disturbed ground anywhere

When: Summer to autumn.

Culinary uses: Young leaves can be used in salads, all leaves, as long as they are healthy looking, can be cooked like spinach. The leaves are rich in minerals and vitamins, but do not have much of a flavour. The seeds can be ground and used as flour. Cooked whole they become gelatinous, but need to be chewed very well, else they will pass straight through the system without giving off its goodness. They are very high in protein and some essential amino acids. However for most varieties the seeds are quite fiddly to collect in quantity.

Medicinal uses: None known

Link:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

Pine, Stone (*pinus pinea*)

Description: The seeds of all pine trees are in theory edible, but only the seeds of the Italian stone oak are of sufficient size to make them worth gathering. The tree grows to a considerable height with long, evergreen needles. The cones are the size of a large fist and the up to 1cm long seeds are hidden behind the scales and encased in a hard nutshell. It's a fiddly and messy job to first release the seed shells, then crack the tough outer casing to get to the tasty seed. It explains why they are so expensive when bought, but the flavour of freshly gathered seeds far exceeds that of commercially bought ones.



Where: Mediterranean woodlands

When: Early autumn



Culinary uses: The seeds, once you get to them, make a delicious snack. Together with olive oil, basil, garlic and Parmesan cheese they are a main ingredient in traditional Pesto Genovese. It also adds a nice crunchy texture to many pasta sauces and is good in sweet dishes such as ice-cream or

cakes.

Medicinal uses: The turpentine obtained from the resin of all pine trees is used in the treatment of bladder and kidney infections. Internally and externally as a rub or steam-bath it relieves rheumatism. It is also beneficial for a number of respiratory and skin complaints.

Recipe: Pesto Genovese: Combine in a food processor or pestle and mortar: a generous handful of fresh basil, a handful of grated Parmesan cheese, a small handful of pine kernels, 1 or 2 gloves of garlic and a good dollop of olive oil and work to a paste. Serve on pasta.

Link:

<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Pinus+pinea>

Plantain, Ribwort or Common (*plantago lanceolata* or *p. major*)

Description: The two most common species of the plantago family (nothing to do with the banana) are Ribwort (photo right) and common plantain (photo below). Both are more useful as medicinal plants and have similar properties. However there is a third less common species, Buck's Horn Plantain (*p. coronopus*, photo bottom), which is the best of them for eating. Ribwort Plantain is marked by its narrow pointy leaves, whilst Common Plantain has wider leaves. Both are ground hugging plants and are decidedly stringy. When the stalk is broken a few threads will show. The flowers appear on thin stalks, starting off green then turning brown as the seeds mature.



Where: Meadows, lawns and waste grounds. Buck's Horn plantain grows on sandy soils near the sea.

When: Almost all year



Culinary uses: Buck's Horn Plantain is best blanched and then added to a salad. The other two are only really used in an SAS type survival situation and young leaves only with the stalks removed and cooked as a potherb. The seeds cooked can be eaten like sago or ground can be added to flour for making bread.

Medicinal uses: This plant is much more valuable as a medicinal herb. A tea made from the leaves, seeds combined with the leaves and flowers and/or roots of dandelion make an excellent liver tonic. A tea made from the leaves and flowers sweetened with honey relieves bronchial complaints. An infusion of the whole plant can be gargled to combat throat and gum infections. The juice applied to insect bites relieves itching. It is also an effective treatment to stem bleeding. Internally it is used for a wide variety of complaints including diarrhoea, gastritis, peptic ulcers, irritable bowel syndrome, haemorrhage, haemorrhoids, cystitis, sinusitis, asthma and hayfever. The seeds combat parasitic worms.



Link:

<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Plantago+major> &
<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Plantago+lanceolata>

Plum (*prunus domestica*)



Description: There are many varieties of wild and cultivated plums which come in a multitude of sizes, and colours, but all are deciduous trees of medium size, bearing yellow, purple, red or green fruit with one single stone in the centre.

Where: Abandoned orchards, hedges and woodlands

When: Summer to autumn, depending on variety

Culinary uses: Fruit is perfect for eating fresh, cooked into jams or stewed, dried as prunes etc. Flowers can be sprinkled onto a salad.

Medicinal uses: Dried fruit is an effective and well-known laxative.

Caution: Seeds and leaves contain hydrogen cyanide which is toxic. Seeds do contain edible oil, but do not use if very bitter tasting.

Link: <http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Prunus+domestica>

Polypody (*polypodium vulgare*)



Description: A member of the fern family, the fronds with triangular leaflets are arranged in 10-18 pairs and grow up to 50cm tall. The leaflets become much shorter towards the end of the frond.

Where: On walls, rocks and trees in shady moist locations all over Europe

When: Best harvested in late autumn

Culinary uses: The rhizomes contain osladin, a compound 500 times sweeter than sugar. It therefore has found use in confectionary such as nougat or liquorice. On its own it is cloyingly sweet and quickly becomes quite sickening.

Medicinal uses: Both an infusion of the roots or leaves, although the latter is less effective, is used to stimulate bile secretion and has a gentle laxative effect. It is also effective in treating liver diseases. A syrup of the whole plant is effective in dispelling parasitic worms.

Caution: Although no toxicity is reported for this plant, many fern species contain carcinogens and/ or toxins. Some rob the body of the vitamin B complex, but people who are on a varied diet and consume moderately should be fine.

Link:

<http://www.naturalmedicinalherbs.net/herbs/p/polypodium-vulgare=polypody.php>

Poppy, Corn (*papaver rhoeas*)



Description: There are numerous species within the poppy family, including of course the opium poppy. The most common however is the corn poppy, the edible part being the seeds, which have no hallucinogenic effect. Other parts of the plant are mildly poisonous, although the

flower is occasionally used in herbalism. Everyone recognises this delicate two-petaled flower, which can be seen from a distance with its bright red flowers, off-setting them from its surroundings. The seeds are harvested from the up to 2cm long, slightly hairy seed pods when they are thoroughly dry and a slight rattling can be heard inside when shaken.

Where: Fields and meadows everywhere.

When: summer

Culinary uses: The seeds can be added to breads or cereals and on salads. In Germany bread rolls are often covered with poppy seeds. The leaves and flowers can be cooked and eaten as a potherb. The flowers make red food dye.

Medicinal uses: A tea made from the flowers sweetened with some honey helps against colds and to calm hyper-active children. Tea made from poppy is a mild sedative, but unlike the sap of the capsules of the opium poppy, is non-addictive. It is also useful to lower fevers and has anti-cancer properties.

Caution: Also the latex of the immature corn poppy has some narcotic effects, although less so than that of the opium poppy. It can be used as a sleep-inducing sedative, but only under expert supervision. Avoid handling poppy if travelling to the Middle East, as incidences of people being arrested are reported for having minute quantities of poppy seeds attached to their clothing.

Link:

<http://www.pfaf.org/user/Plant.aspx?LatinName=Papaver+rhoeas>