



A CHARTER FOR THE SUSTAINABLE HARVESTING OF WILD FOODS

*Foragers should respect the plants, the environment as a whole, and take into consideration of the need to share some wild plants with the wildlife of the area and take account of the rights of land owners.

*Foragers should also respect other foragers, although no wild foods belong to any of us, we should all respect each other's 'Patches'

* Unlike cultivated foods that are planted by humans for a single quantifiable harvest, wild foods are an occurrence of nature itself and a full understanding and appreciation of this hap-hazard propagation when it comes to harvesting should never be under estimated.

*While Ireland has abundant wild food plants, and only a very few of our indigenous and naturalised wild plants are on the 'at risk' list, foragers should guard carefully what we have, so that the generations to come can enjoy our wild food.

*It's crucial to learn how to harvest without destroying a plant, a tree, fungi, seashore vegetable, or seaweed.

*Wild plants regenerate themselves naturally, either by spreading their seed or spores, by regrowth, or by creeping rizomes, or self-rooting arched branches.

*Cutting hedgerows before the berries are harvested is wasting food depriving both birds and humans.





WILD HERBS AND GREENS

By their nature wild herbs and greens have very loose roots. All care must be taken when harvesting leaves not to disturb the root mass, e.g. pull up or move a wild sorrel plant and that's the end of that plant. Harvest the larger leaves and allow the small ones to grow on and you harvest it again and again all summer and in years to come.

WILD FLOWERS AND BLOSSOMS

Although wild flowers such as the primrose etc. are more than pleasing in summer salads, the centre of all wild flowers is the seed for the next generation and needs cross-pollination by bees and insects to give us next year's wild crop. Blossoms are flowers where humans have recognised this fact, apple blossom and rose blossom are just two...pick these beautiful flowers for your salads and you get no apples or rosehips, simple. Wilting blossoms are the best, after cross-pollination and just the petals not the fruit centre.

WILD SEAWEEDS

Seaweed can only regenerate if it is cut leaving several inches on the plant which will in a year or eighteen months grow again. Harvest seaweed by pulling it from the rocks with the 'hold fast' attached and it dies. Seaweeds and sea plants have a season that is later than land plants, maybe by two months...don't harvest too early, give the weeds and plants a chance to propagate.



WILD FRUITS

We won't get the fruits unless we have left the blossoms, simple. The Elder Tree is a prime example for the Forager. Pick all the flowers in spring for your Elder Flower Wine and then you don't have Elder Berries for your game dishes in the autumn. Meantime you've also deprived the bees with their harvest and cross-pollination with the flowers and also the birds of a feast and by default the natural dispersion of next year's seedlings.

WILD MUSHROOMS

Fungi grow from spores in the ground. Pick an elderly wild mushroom that is past eating and you have prevented the spores needed to grow fungi in that place next year. Many 'new foragers' seem to have got into the habit of bringing home large 'Trophy' mushrooms to show off. These are usually mushrooms that are not firm and are well past their sell-by date. Mushrooms such as these are should be left to spore for next year's crop and it's not cool to pick them.

Best Practice

DO leave at least a third of the blossom, flowers, berries, seed heads, nuts, leaves, seashore vegetables and seaweeds on the plant and cut, don't pull.

DON'T break branches to make gathering easier.

DON'T pick or bring home fungi that is over mature

DON'T venture into private land without permission

DON'T pick plants in conservation areas where there is a Department of Environment notice that states you should not do so.

DO take care where you park your car. Don't block farm gates.

DO close all farm gates after you. DO bring all your litter home.

DON'T dig up wild plants.





Disclaimer

For countless generations our forefathers/mothers gathered Wild Foods and it seems they did so pretty well...after all we're all still here! However modern protocol demands that we produce a disclaimer like this. So here we go.

The above plant images, although helpful, are not for identifying purposes. It is important to use a good guide, unless you are familiar with these plants. This post is only an introduction to the plants mentioned therein, and should not be relied upon in isolation. Foraging guides of repute should always be used, and one should always err on the conservative side, remembering, that it is important to read any guide together with any caution notes, and ultimately responsibility for your safety and those that you give, serve or sell these foods to, lies with you.

All information contained including various recipes are purely for illustrative and informative purposes only and ultimately it is the user that determines as to how the above mentioned Wild Food, might be used.

