

How to go Foraging

There's nothing complicated about going foraging! One thing is certain, though – you will need to go outside. If you have a garden, or a park close to your home, that's as good a place to start as any.

Check the weather forecast. You will need to wear footwear that is appropriate for the weather conditions and also for where you're planning to go. It's always a good idea to take a hat and maybe waterproofs, depending on the time of year or the forecast.

You can go foraging at any time of day, as long as it's light enough to see! You can also go foraging at any time of year – although, as you might expect, there are more plants around in the spring, summer and autumn (fall) months than in the winter. Have a look at the chart that is included in this pack, which gives a guide to what is available and when.

All you need to do next is look around and see what you can find. Be aware that every single plant could be a contender. Sometimes, people look right past something tasty, often because they are so accustomed to seeing it every day that they actually don't notice it at all. Good examples of this are Cleavers (p.85), Nettles (p.130) and Dandelions (p.92). Don't take anything for granted.

Of course, not every single plant you see will be one that is included in Foraging with Kids, but many of the common ones are. Have a look through the book to see if there's a plant that you already recognize, then read all about



it. The more you look and the more you read, the more you will learn. We have also included activity sheets for 3 of the plants that are most commonly found in this pack – dandelions, nettles and blackberries – so why not start with those?!

What you will need

- **If you're very safety conscious**, you might like to pop a small pack of antibacterial or antiseptic wipes into your pocket (I have carried the same pack around with me for seven years now and still haven't needed to open it, although maybe one day I will). The same goes for plasters (band-aids), just in case you have a run-in with a thorn or two.
- **A camera** (maybe on a phone) is useful for taking pictures of plants or fungi, especially ones that you might not recognize yet. If you put a coin next to the plant, including it in the picture, this will give you an idea of the scale for future reference.
- **A magnifying eyeglass** (sometimes called a loupe) is not essential, but certainly fun.

They're cheap to buy online (get one with a 10 x magnification, 18mm/¾in lens). To use, put the lens as close to your eye as possible so that you can examine the tiniest aspects of your specimen. Minuscule hairs and leaf-patterns will be revealed clearly. Using a magnifying glass like this will open up a whole new world!

- You will also need to **take something in which to carry your harvest**. Plastic bags are not great because they cause plants to "sweat". A canvas or hessian bag, or a basket that you can sling across your chest, are all perfect (see also Further Resources on p.220).
- You'll also need to take a **notebook and pencil**. Use them to make a note of what you have found, including the date and time, and the habitat of the plant. Are the leaves unfurled? Is there a flower? How many petals? What colour is the stem? What colour are the leaves? Note as many details as you can in your foraging logbook. You can also use it to make drawings of your finds.

Where to go foraging

Here's a secret: you don't need to head off into remote rural areas or the wilderness to find plants. Although these places are generally teeming with plants and other wildlife, I have found that the best foraging to be had is generally in towns and cities.

Are you surprised? If you think about it, it makes sense. People use plants all the time. We plant them with the intention of cooking and eating them. We also plant them to make our gardens look nice, often without realizing



sometimes by accident (lots of seeds are carried on the soles of our shoes, or in our trouser turn-ups, or even in our poo). So, it follows that in a place with lots of different people from lots of different places, there will also be lots of different kinds of plants, too. Cities, which are full of different nationalities, are GREAT places for foraging!

Having said that, some plants have preferred habitats. If you want to find coastal plants, you will need to go to the coast; if you want to find plants such as Heather or Bilberries, then you will need to head for the hills. Otherwise, I would advise that instead of going to look for something very specific, you might do better to start the other way around, by having a look around your immediate neighbourhood to see what is there. Sometimes, it can be a mistake to search for one specific thing, because we can miss several others in our single-mindedness.

that many “ornamental” plants are also edible. We turn plants into fabric or rope. We use them as dyes, to colour fabric. We use them as medicine. For thousands of years we have carried plants from one part of the planet to another; sometimes deliberately (such as the potato, which first came from South America) and

HERE ARE A FEW SAFETY POINTS TO CONSIDER WHEN YOU GO FORAGING:

- **Kids** – do make sure that you are supervised at all times. Don't go foraging on your own, unless your parents or guardians have given you permission to do so.
- **Always ask a grown-up** before testing wild foods that you're not completely sure about.
- **When foraging**, it is likely that you will be trying food that you have never eaten before. Therefore, and especially if you are prone to allergies, it makes sense to try just a little of something first, as you would with any food.
- **Adults** – After trying a few wild foods, kids may be tempted to test other plants too (this is perfectly natural and small children, especially, will want to do this). If you are taking a younger person on a forage, be aware and keep a close eye on them.

**REMEMBER – NOT ALL PLANTS
ARE SAFE TO EAT!**

Mindful foraging (or “foraging etiquette”)

“Etiquette” is a French word, and means “polite behaviour”. When we go foraging, it's important to remember that it's not just us humans that need plants to survive. Plants are vital to the entire animal kingdom. I have a feeling that you will be very aware of this anyway, so please forgive me if I'm telling you things that you already know. Here are a couple of polite foraging rules:

- 1 Only gather what you need, or can use. Tempting though it might be to pick a huge bagful of blackberries, if you're not going to use them it's wasteful. It also means that the wild creatures that rely on your harvest for their food will have missed out. When gathering leaves, take just a few from each plant, so that the plant can grow back.
- 2 Never be tempted to strip an entire tree, shrub, or indeed any plant, of all its flowers or fruits. Take a little from each plant, and no more than you need or can use. My own rule about Elderberries, for example, is to take only what I can comfortably reach; I don't use sticks or ladders to take anything higher up, as birds need them, and it feels wrong to do anything else. No-one is going to arrest you for picking berries from the top of the tree, so you have to rely on your own little voice inside to do what feels right, remembering what you already know about being a small part of a very much larger whole.





NOURISH

Extracted from
Foraging with Kids by
Adele Nozedar

Seasonal Calendar

This calendar and the key below will give you an idea of which parts of the plants featured in *Foraging with Kids* are available at different times of the year, giving you an idea of what you can expect to find before you head out on your forage – information on each plant, as well as recipes, ideas and projects for each one can be found within the book itself.

CALENDAR KEY:



ROOT & BULBS



LEAF



BUDS & FLOWER



FRUIT



STEM OR TRUNK



SEED



HARVEST*

* The harvest symbol is used to indicate the best time to pick fungi and coastal plants (where the whole plant is harvested at once). Be aware, though, that sometimes plants and fungi will stray outside these rules.

Plant Name	Early Spring	Late Spring	Early Summer	Late Summer	Early Autumn	Late Autumn	Early Winter	Late Winter
Bilberries (p.33)								
Blackberries (p.36)								
Blackthorn (p.44)								
Bladderwrack (p.206)								
Burdock (p.78)								
Cauliflower Funghi (p.150)								
Chicken of the Woods (p.153)								
Chickweed (p.82)								
Cleavers (p.85)								
Crab Apples (p.26)								
Crow Garlic (p.169)								
Daisy (p.89)								
Damsons (p.49)								
Dandelion (p.92)								
Douglas Fir (p.193)								
Dulse (p.209)								
Elder (p.54)								
Fat Hen (p.99)								
Giant Puffball (p.156)								
Greater Plantain (p.102)								

Plant Name	Early Spring	Late Spring	Early Summer	Late Summer	Early Autumn	Late Autumn	Early Winter	Late Winter
Ground Elder (p.107)								
Ground Ivy (p.110)								
Hairy Bittercress (p.171)								
Hawthorn (p.61)								
Heather (p.113)								
Horse Chestnut (p.189)								
Horseradish (p.117)								
Jack-by-the-Hedge (p.173)								
Laver (p.211)								
Linden (p.199)								
Mint (Corn) (p.124)								
Mint (Water) (p.126)								
Morel (p.159)								
Nettles (p.130)								
Pineapple Weed (p.136)								
Ramsons (p.180)								
Rock Samphire (p.214)								
Rose (p.68)								
Rosebay Willowherb (p.139)								
Rowan (p.65)								
Three-cornered Leek (p.177)								
Scarlet Elf Cup (p.161)								
Sea Beet (p.217)								
Shaggy Ink Cap (p.164)								
Sorrel (p.141)								
Sweet Chestnut (p.196)								
Wild Cherries (p.30)								
Wild Marjoram (p.121)								
Wild Plums (p.47)								
Wild Raspberries (p.41)								
Wintercress (p.183)								
Wood Sorrel (p.144)								

KEY: ROOT & BULBS LEAF BUDS & FLOWER FRUIT SEEDS HARVEST STEM OR TRUNK

Nettles

Latin name: *Urtica dioica*

Where can I find them?

Nettles, in one form or another, can be found pretty much everywhere on the planet, without exception.

What do they look like?

Nettles will grow to up to 2m (6½ft) tall, dying down in the colder months in some places but often visible all year round. The dark green leaves are larger at the bottom of the plant and smaller at the top, varying between 2–15cm (¾–6in) in length. The leaves have small serrations along them, like a saw. The seeds, which appear in the late summer and early autumn (fall), look like long tassels. If you ever pull up the roots of Nettles, you'll see that they are a bright yellow colour. You might even recognize them by their sting!

Did you know?

- Nettles are one of the very first plants to colonize places of human habitation, and this might be one of the reasons that some people believe that the Romans introduced Nettles to Britain when they first visited the country some 2000 years ago. As the centurions moved along, exploring, Nettles grew where they'd passed.
- Nettles are edible. We've been eating them for thousands of years. Foragers love Nettles because they're common, they're good for you, and they're very tasty. Not so very long ago, they

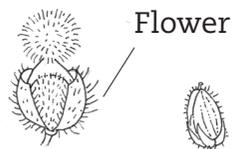
Why do Nettles sting?

Let's be honest, we're not entirely certain why Nettles sting. It has been suggested that they do it to stop animals eating them, but this doesn't explain why all plants don't do the same thing. Thank goodness they don't – salads would be a nightmare! As it happens, not all members of the Nettle family sting. Some of the non-stinging kind are called "Dead Nettles" and they are also good to eat.

These are delicious roasted very quickly in a pan, preferably over a camp fire, since all food tastes better outside for some reason.

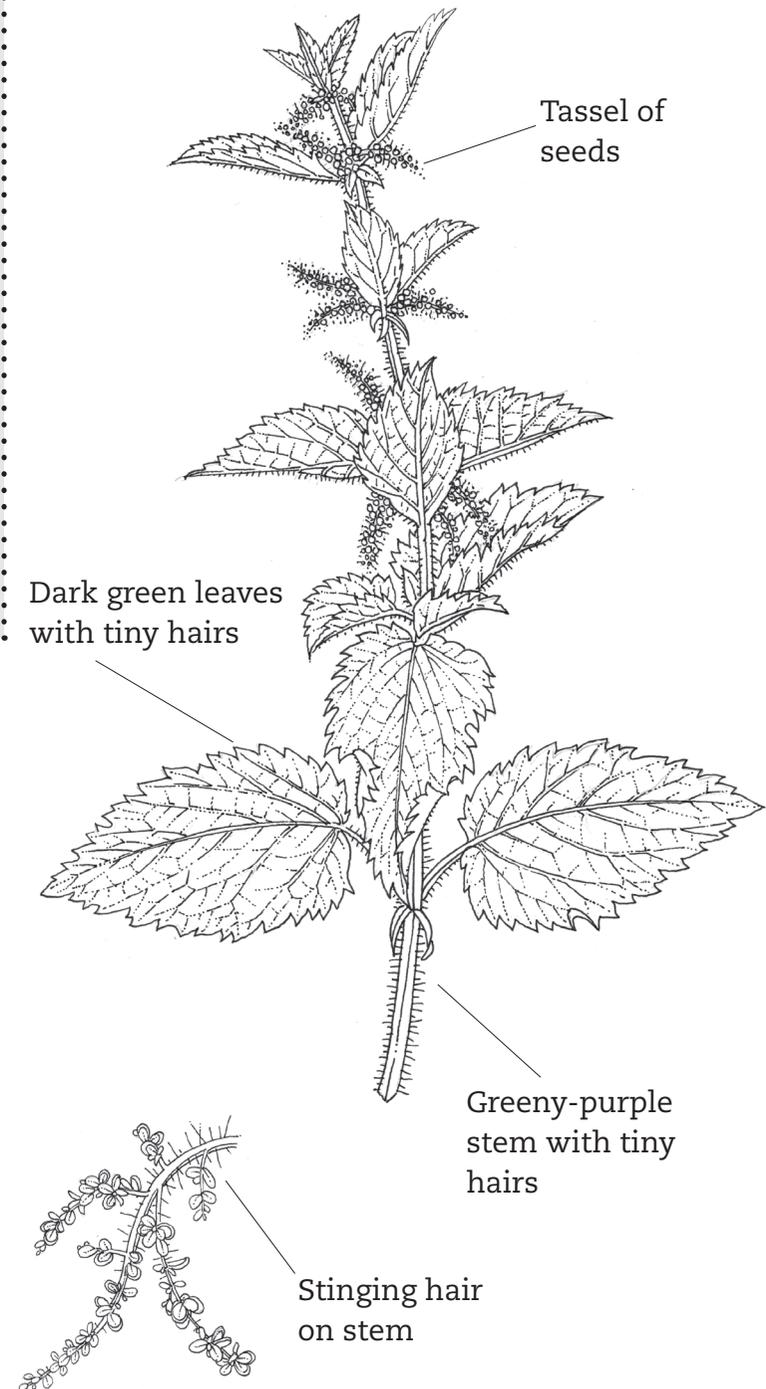
were called "Poor Man's Spinach".

- Nettles make very strong, long-lasting fibre and rope. Humans have been making cloth from Nettles for millennia; some scraps of Nettle cloth, dating back 3,000 years, have been found in Denmark.
- Nettles are a medicine. There's a list of folk remedies using them that's as long as your arm, covering just about everything from curing dog bites to an antidote for poison. Folk remedies don't always work, since they're usually based on superstition rather than scientific fact.



Flower

Individual dark green seed



Tassel of seeds

Dark green leaves with tiny hairs

Greeny-purple stem with tiny hairs

Stinging hair on stem



Cream of Nettle Soup with Roasted Garlic

**TRY
THIS AT
HOME**

Lots of people know that Nettles can be made into a soup, but not so many people have actually eaten it. This recipe is likely to become a firm favourite; as well as being tasty, it's nutritious and costs just pennies to make!

Serves 4

100g (3½oz) (3 good handfuls) fresh young nettle leaves
2 large (or 3 small) whole garlic bulbs
3½ tbsp butter
1 tbsp vegetable oil
1 large onion, peeled and chopped
350g (12oz) potatoes, scrubbed, cut into

evenly sized cubes
600ml (21fl oz/2½ cups) vegetable or chicken stock
500ml (17fl oz/2 cups) single (light) cream, plus a little extra to serve
salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 220°C/425°F/Gas Mark 7.

Put the nettle leaves into a colander and rinse thoroughly to remove any dirt. Snip off any bits of stem. Set aside.

Separate the garlic cloves and slice the flat end off of each one. Wrap loosely in a 20-cm (8-in) square of foil and roast in the oven for 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, put the butter and oil into a saucepan set over a medium heat. When the butter is sizzling, add the onion and potato. Cook, stirring, until the onions are golden, about 5 minutes. Add the stock, bring to the simmer, then, cover and cook for 15 minutes.

Remove the garlic from the oven and allow to cool slightly. Squeeze the garlic from its cases into the saucepan, add the nettles and simmer for 10 minutes.

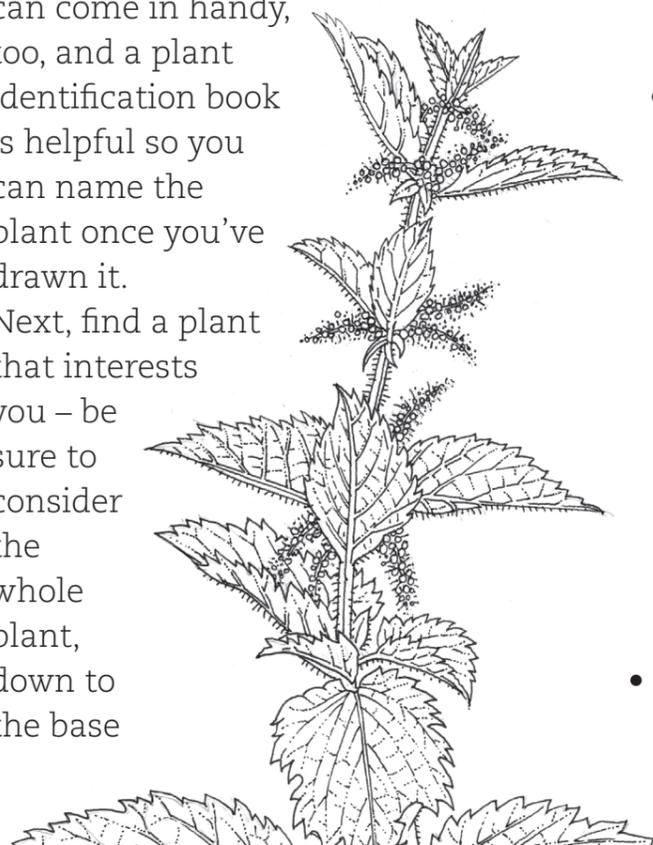
Remove the pan from the heat and let it cool a little. Blend the soup with a hand-held (immersion) blender until smooth, then add the cream, stir well and return to the heat to warm through.

Ladle into soup bowls. Top with a swirl of extra cream and a sprinkle of salt and freshly ground black pepper. Serve with a chunk of lovely fresh bread.

Drawing Plants

The best way to learn to recognize plants is always to look at them very, very closely. Then, to have a go at drawing them. Lizzie Harper, the illustrator of *Foraging with Kids*, has the following advice.

- A really brilliant way to learn about plants is to draw them. It doesn't make any difference whether you can scarcely hold a pencil, or if you're the second Leonardo da Vinci, it's the looking that counts.
- Draw what you actually see, rather than what you think is there (a good way to test this is to compare a drawing that you have done of a flower from your imagination with one that you have drawn when staring at an actual plant – you'll see an enormous difference).
- First, get paper and pencil and a rubber together. A magnifying glass can come in handy, too, and a plant identification book is helpful so you can name the plant once you've drawn it.
- Next, find a plant that interests you – be sure to consider the whole plant, down to the base



- of the stem. Set yourself up next to it and make sure you won't be distracted for half an hour.
- Start off by drawing a rough shape of the plant in light pencil on your paper, with a suggestion of where each leaf is and where the flowering parts are. Try to look at features such as the shape of the leaves and how they attach to the stem, how many petals or smaller flowers are involved in the flowering parts, and what the buds and fruit look like.
- Once you've got this light "map" down, you can start to add the detail. Look to see what the edges of the leaves do: are they smooth or have they got teeth? What direction do the leaf veins go in? What shape is each petal? Is the leaf smooth or hairy? Has the stem got spines on it, or is it smooth? Add these layers of information to your drawing.
- Have a think about why these traits might be there as you go along; is the flower coloured that way to attract insects? Why does the plant have to arm itself with thorns? What's the point of encasing a seed in a hard wooden nutshell? You'll have to stare and stare to sort out some of these details; this is where the learning happens – as you look so intently you'll find that you unconsciously learn how the plant is put together.
- Use the magnifying glass to sort out the details of things (like the

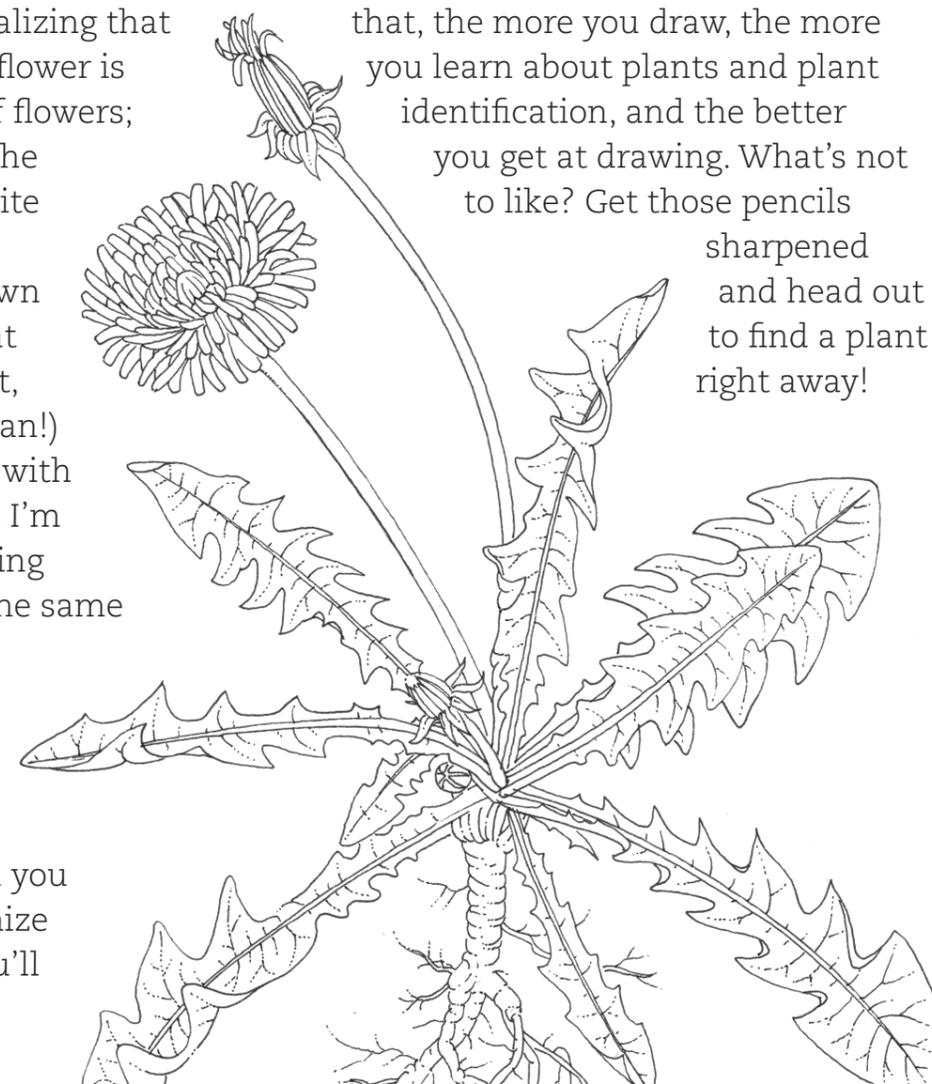


middle of a flower or the tiny veins on a leaf). Feel free to pull the plant apart as you draw it; you're figuring out how it works, so you need to break it into its basic parts. Think of a mechanic at work on a motor, tinkering and taking it apart to see what's going on with each small bit of the whole engine. By understanding each element of a plant you learn how it works as a whole organism.

- I love this part of drawing, and find out incredible facts that blow me away. For example, finding out that each petal of the Wood Sorrel flower has the most delicate dark purple lines on it, which follow the veins that supply the petal with water and nutrients. Or realizing that the Common Daisy flower is actually two sorts of flowers; tiny yellow ones in the centre, and each white petal a perfect little white flower in its own right. (Go on, get that magnifying glass out, you'll see what I mean!) These things fill me with joy and wonder, and I'm sure your own drawing discoveries will do the same for you.
- Once you've drawn your plant, even if the resulting picture isn't a thing of beauty, you'll find you can instantly recognize that plant again. You'll

have learned so much more about it than you ever could have done by just referring to a book. You'll know it inside and out, and this is because you'll have spent so long with it, staring at it, looking it, understanding it. All these things are required when you draw a plant, and that's why sketching plants is such a brilliant way to improve your plant identification skills.

- **ONE LAST THING:** do NOT get hung up on whether or not you've made a good picture. The drawing itself is of secondary importance. The wonder and the glory of it all is that you've been lost in concentration and learning through looking, you've been drawing. And the best bit is that, the more you draw, the more you learn about plants and plant identification, and the better you get at drawing. What's not to like? Get those pencils



sharpened and head out to find a plant right away!

Need a little help getting started? Why not colour in the illustration of nettles below ... Try to find the plant in nature and match the colours as closely as possible. This will help you think about how to approach your own drawings and also help with identifying the plant in the future. When you're done, why not try flipping over this sheet of paper and drawing your own version of blackberries from scratch?



Now try drawing your own version of nettles in the box below.

