



Spring Green Salad from Garden 'Weeds'

When the weather turns and Spring has sprung, we can be pulled out to tend our gardens. Many people weed out plants that they may not know could be harvested for a nutritious salad. Here, Anna introduces nine common Spring plants that grow in gardens, hedgerows and meadows that you can get to know and enjoy their gifts.

Garlic Hedge Mustard *Alliaria petiolata*

Also known as 'Jack by the Hedge', as its name suggests it is in the mustard family and has a garlic like flavour.

- You can find it growing along the edges of fields, woodlands and hedgerows.
- Wavey edge to somewhat heart shaped leaves growing up the stem.
- You can eat both the first year's growth of just the leaves, and the second year's growth where leaves are more arrow-like in shape and slightly pointier serrations and a flower spike grows at the top with tiny four petalled flowers.

Common Sorrel *Rumex acetosa*

This is common in fields and meadows and likes to grow in the open sun.

- Common sorrel has a lemony flavour from a chemical called oxalic acid. It is fine in small quantities, but you don't want to eat large quantities or to eat it every day.
- It has an arrow shaped leaf and likes sun and meadows.
- Poisonous lookalike: Lords and Ladies *Arum maculatum* also has an arrow shaped leaf, but likes shady, damp places.

Daisy *Bellis perennis*

Often found in lawns, the flowers and leaves of the daisy are edible and delicious. It has an almost sort of salty flavour.

- The leaf is spoon shaped.
- The flowers open in the sun and close at night.
- The flowers will close once you have picked them.

Ox-Eye Daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*

The leaves of the Ox-Eye Daisy are a delicious addition to any salad. It's a daisy which grows about a foot tall and flowers on the top of that stem.

- Also known as Moonflower, it does not close up at night.
- Leaves can be gathered throughout the winter months and into the spring and summer.

Wild Oregano *Oreganum vulgare*

Wild oregano can be found growing up on the hills of the South Downs. It likes a warm, sunny position and will grow on dry, infertile soils.

- Wild oregano is delicious to add into salads. The leaves are especially good for the gut flora of your body.
- The leaves are arranged opposite to each other on the stems. They are not as intensely aromatic as Mediterranean oregano, being grown in a cooler climate.
- From summer to early autumn, it has tiny flowers, ranging from white to purple, clustered on flowering stems. The flowers are attractive to all sorts of insects, from bumblebees to butterflies.

Primrose *Primula vulgaris*

Primrose can be found growing throughout our woodlands and in the hedgerows.

- The flowers are edible, though only pick a few from each clump. They can also make a calming tea.
- Primrose flowers have five petals and are pale lemon or white, with a deep yellow centre. The long crinkled leaves form a rosette at the base of the plant.

Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*

Dandelion can be found growing in the sunny places in gardens and meadows. It has medicine for many ailments. It is a bitter herb, helping digestion and detoxification.

- The flowers are edible. Best to use the petals removed from the sepals. Sprinkle on salad or use in cakes, drop scones etc.
- The stem can be used as a straw.
- The leaves are good to eat in salads.
- The root can be washed, chopped and roasted and makes and brewed to make a nutritious coffee like drink.

Sow Thistle *Sonchus Oleraceus*

Smooth Sow Thistle is common as a garden weed and you will notice it along the edges of paths and on waste ground.

- Its leaves are good to eat.
- It provides greens through much of the year.
- It is a cousin of lettuce and is in the daisy family along with dandelion.

Musk Mallow *Malva moschata*

Musk Mallow grows in meadows and fields and enjoys sunny places.

- It is in the mallow family and many of this family have edible leaves.
- The leaves and flowers are edible.
- This plant has a soothing texture known as ‘musiligenous’. This is part of its medicine. It soothes the membranes of the throat and is good for coughs.
- You can gather the seeds from wild plants and scatter them in your garden.

Invisible Learning

- Nature provides us with food and medicine through the gifts of the plants
- Correctly identifying plants is an important skill to develop
- Foraging considerations

Hazards to Highlight

- Foraging hazards (see other videos)
- Poisonous lookalikes
- Taking too much

Risk Assessment Considerations

These are the risk assessment consideration documents to be referred to for this activity.

- Plant Based Activities
- Site risk assessment (specific to your site)

Links

- Related game : Plant duplication. Memory game. Plant pairs snap.
- Related Activity: Leaf prints. Pesto making.

Tags

- Foraging, Spring, Greens, Plants, Edible, Flowers,

