

WILD FOOD GUIDE - JUNE/JULY

5, May, 2020



ASH (FRAXINUS EXCELSIOR)

Ash is one of the most common trees in the UK, the young, green, immature seeds of the Ash tree (also known as 'keys') are edible and have long been used in herbal medicine.

You pick the seeds when they are very young to avoid them developing stringy fibres, to test snap one of the ash seeds/keys to make sure it is crisp and not fibrous.

Firstly boil the seeds/keys to get rid of their bitterness, then pickle them with vinegar, sugar and your choice of spices.

ELDER (SAMBUCUS NIGRA)

Elder is a very common tree within Scotland of which the flowers and berries are edible, these however do require cooking to remove the small amount of toxic chemicals found in them. We have already located these trees at sunnyside plantation in Cardenden.



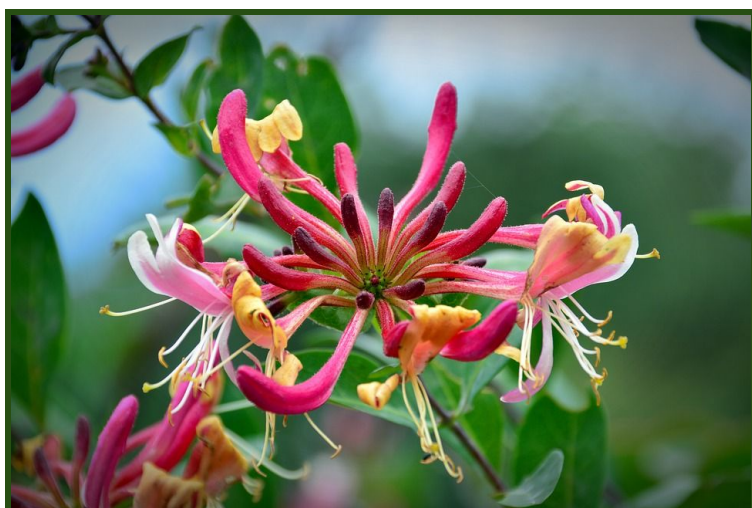
Elder is often found in woodland and hedgerows. They are easily identified by their creamy white flowers that hang in clusters, pick them when their buds are freshly opened and well away from roadsides where traffic fumes can taint their flavour. Also be conscious that stripping any one tree bare of the flowers will prevent it from developing its berries afterwards, birds rely upon these food sources for preparing for winter.

Firstly shake your flower clusters to remove any insects and give a good rinse with cold water. They can be used fresh as flavouring for cordial, tea, wine, liqueurs and syrups. Alternatively you can dry the flowers and use them as a substitute for fresh flowers in most recipes.

HONEYSUCKLE (LONICERA PERICLYMENUM)

Honeysuckle is common and widespread and can often be found in woodlands and hedgerow, weaving through shrubs and trees.

They are easily identifiable by their tinted red, trumpet shaped flowers that



appear from June until September. Their leaves are oval shaped and deep green in colour, with short stalks, leaves are arranged in pairs opposite each other. In Autumn clusters of red berries form.

Honeysuckle is extremely valuable to wildlife, butterflies such as the white admiral which are in decline rely on this plant as well as bees. At night

when the sweet scent of the honeysuckle is at its strongest it attracts pollinating moths. Birds including thrushes, warblers and bullfinches eat the berries that ripen late summer to autumn. Dormice use the bark from the honeysuckle plant to build nests for their summer young, also eating the sweet, nectar rich flowers as an energy source.

The honeysuckle plant also has many uses to us, you only need a few flowers to capture their essence. You can use them to infuse water to make a refreshing tea, sorbets, cordials, jams or jellies. Can also be added to gin and chilled fizzy water. Don't eat the berries as these are mildly toxic, especially in introduced garden varieties.

ROSE (ROSA SPECIES)

Dog Rose is the most commonly encountered wild rose, often found in hedgerows, woodland and grassland areas. It will be identifiable at this time of year by its large pink or white flowers which each have five petals and many stamens, they also have a



faint sweet smell. The leaves are on alternate sides of the stem, and divided into 2-3 pairs of smaller, toothed leaves.

The rose also has a fruit, a red, oval, berry-like hip, they form in clusters and each contains many hairy seeds.

Dog rose flowers are an important source of nectar for insects and its fruits serve as a food source for birds such as blackbirds and redwings.

The hips of the dog rose will usually ripen around September-October, however there will be many flowers on the rose at this time of year which have many uses. You can use the petals raw through salads (clean with cold water first) infused in vinegar or make jam. A lot of Asian dishes use dried rose petals.

If you have any questions or want to show us anything you have produced related to this guide please email us at cardeneden@orevalleyha.org.uk