

Get started with a foraging course

If you're new to foraging, consider signing up for a local foraging course. It's a great way to safely learn how to identify edible plants and fungi in your area, while connecting with others who share the same interest. Learning directly from an experienced guide in your local environment is one of the best ways to build confidence and knowledge.

Foraging safely: plant and fungus identification tips

Before harvesting any wild plants or fungi, make sure you can confidently identify them. Spend time learning about toxic species in your region and become familiar with both the herbs you're seeking and any potential lookalikes to avoid dangerous mistakes.

Always take a reliable guidebook with you when foraging, especially if you're unsure about a find. There are also many Facebook identification groups that can help you double-check what you've found.

When taking a photograph to post on a Facebook identification group, to identify a plant or mushroom, take multiple photos from different angles:

- Close-ups of the specimen itself
- The tree or surface it's growing on (if applicable)
- The surrounding habitat

For example, if you come across a yellow bracket fungus you think might be *Chicken of the Woods*, photograph the fungus, the log or tree it's growing on (to identify the species), and the broader area. Many plants and fungi only grow in specific habitats, climates, or regions—such context is often key for accurate identification.

Be aware of contamination

Stay mindful of where you're picking:

- Avoid plants near roadsides, which may be polluted by vehicle emissions.
 - Be cautious around the edges of agricultural fields, where herbicides like glyphosate may have been sprayed.
 - Steer clear of areas where dogs may piss, as plants may be contaminated with urine.
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Forage responsibly

When you do forage, only take what you need. Be mindful of the environment and other foragers, as well as the wildlife that may depend on those plants or fungi as a food source. A respectful, sustainable approach ensures that nature continues to provide for everyone.

All wild plants in the UK are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). You can pick small quantities of common wild plants, flowers, fruits, and fungi for personal use - unless they are protected or you're on private land without permission.

It is illegal to:

- Uproot or dig up any wild plant without the landowner's permission.
- Collect any species listed as protected or endangered (check Schedule 8 of the Act).
- Forage from Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or nature reserves without permission.

Check plant status

- Ensure what you're collecting is not endangered, red-listed, or protected.

Respect the countryside

- Close gates behind you and be mindful of livestock and land use.
- Stick to footpaths where appropriate and avoid damaging habitats.

Recommended Reference Books & Websites:

Books

Food for Free - Richard Mabey

A classic guide to edible wild plants in the UK. Ideal for beginners and seasoned foragers alike.

Hedgerow Medicine - Julie Bruton-Seal & Matthew Seal

Focuses on the medicinal uses of common wild plants found in British hedgerows, with practical recipes and remedies.

Mushrooms - Roger Phillips

A comprehensive and richly photographed guide to mushrooms in the UK and Europe. Considered one of the best mushroom ID books.

Edible and Medicinal Wild Plants of Britain and Ireland: A Foraging and Photographic Identification Guide - Robin Harford

A practical field guide that includes detailed photographs and usage notes. Accessible and grounded in ethical foraging practices.

Braiding Sweetgrass - Robin Wall Kimmerer

A beautifully written collection of essays blending Indigenous wisdom, science, and the deep relationship between humans and the natural world.

The Edible City: A Year of Wild Food - John Rensten

An urban foraging guide that follows a year of edible discoveries through streets, parks, and green spaces. Ideal for those living in towns and cities who want to connect with nature.

The Forager's Calendar - John Wright

A month-by-month guide to what you can forage throughout the year in the UK.

Foraging Pocket Guide: Food For All Seasons From Britain's Woods, Meadows And Riversides - Marlow Renton

A compact and easy-to-use guide perfect for taking into the field. Great for beginners and those looking for a seasonal approach to foraging.

Websites

[Eat Weeds](#)

A well-respected online resource offering plant profiles, recipes, articles, and courses focused on foraging in the British Isles.

Youtube creators

[WildFoodUK](#)

An excellent UK-based channel offering practical, seasonal foraging tips and plant/mushroom identification guides. Great for beginners and more advanced foragers alike.

[Black Forager \(Alexis Nikole Nelson\)](#)

US-based forager and educator known for her videos on wild food, plant history, and foraging ethics.

Courses

Steve England Outdoor Learning

Based in Bristol

Walks focused on wild food, plants, and fungi. Great for beginners.

steveengland.co.uk

Wild Food UK

Courses across the UK

Beginner-friendly walks and workshops on edible plants and mushrooms.

wildfooduk.com

The Wild Side of Life

Various locations

Fungi-focused courses run by Fred Gillam.

thewildsideoflife.co.uk

Rhizome Clinic

Based in Bristol

Wild medicine foraging walks and courses.

<https://www.rhizomeclinic.org.uk/walks-talks-workshops.html>