

## Resource 10.

# *Wild Medicine and Food walk*

The Pilgrims would have had to have relied on the plants and trees around them for food and medicine, so they could survive. Go for a walk and find plants that would have been used for medicine and food (not to be actually eaten!). Tick them off when you find them, you could even collect them carefully and grind them up with a pestle and mortar as doctors would have done.



**Nettles** - the favoured leaves to pick are the tips – they're tender and give the best flavour. You can use gloves to avoid being stung. The leaves have a flavour somewhere between cabbage and spinach. You can use nettle in the same way as spinach or to make tea, beer or soup (try creamy nettle and potato).



**Bramble** - The pastime of blackberry picking (blackberrying) goes back thousands of years. Ripe juicy blackberries have high vitamin C content and can be eaten raw or cooked. You can add them to pies, crumbles, wines, jams, jellies and vinegar. It's been widely used in traditional medicine for its healing and detoxifying properties and fibres from its stems have even been used to make string. Blackberry bushes be used thorny stems as a boundary or barrier in the way we use barbed wire.



**Dandelions** - all parts of this slightly bitter plant are edible, both raw and cooked. Add young leaves to salads, sandwiches or pies. Flowers can be used in many dishes from risotto to omelettes, for decoration and to make beer and wine. Unopened buds can be marinated and used like capers. Roots can also be thrown into stir-fries or added to vegetable dishes or try making dandelion coffee by drying then grinding the roots.





**Cow Parsley** - Cow parsley was used in traditional medicines and is said to help treat various ailments, such as stomach and kidney problems, breathing difficulties and colds. It has always been used as mosquito repellent.



**Dock leaves** - The roots and leaves are used in traditional Austrian medicine internally to treat viral infections. The milk in the dock leaf contains tannins as well as oxalic acid which are considered as an astringent. The leaves are also used to soothe blisters, burns and nettle stings. These edible leaves are used in cooking as herbs. Cooked roots of these edible plants are consumed as food.



**Acorns** - In pastimes, acorns were collected and ground to meal for flour. The 'acorn milk', a by-product of this process, was also drunk. Acorns were gathered for snacking, roasting, boiling or drying to add to meals. However, it is worth noting that caution is now given before eating acorns that have not been properly treated – leached of their plant tannins – and that eating the nuts raw is not recommended. Oak leaves were once used to make wine and even the trunk of the tree has provided an edible source of gum.



**Ferns** – When boiled in oil or fat, can be used for wounds, cuts, sores, snakebites and fever.

A poultice or lotion made from the roots of ferns reduce inflammation.

The fern stems and leaves can be used in salads.



**Silver birch trees** - used in traditional medicine in the treatment of high blood pressure, gout and kidney stones. Birch sap contains acid which is great at boosting the immune system in humans and tests have found that it can help the immune system recognise cancer cells and destroy them helping in the fight against cancer.

The bark can be soaked in water and formed into a caste for broken bones.