



Foraging from the Forest!

Did you know that you can eat that?

Turns out, a lot of things in our local forests and fields aren't just for wildlife to snack on, we can eat them too! Let's learn about some local plants that you can eat. Are you up for trying something local in your diet?

Fiddleheads

Fiddleheads are the top of young baby ferns. If you pick them at just the right moment, they are tender with a bit of a crunch and cook up in a frying pan with some oil and seasonings.



Wood Sorrel

These little ground plants, may remind you of clovers. They have 3 heart-shaped leaves on each stem. You can pick these in large quantities (because they really cook down) to make a soup or sauce. Make sure to pick away from the trail where humans and dogs haven't been walking.

Dandelions

What? You can eat weeds too? Turns out that dandelions are very edible! You can put the green leaves into salads, eat the flowers or use them for tea, and use the roots to roast in the oven! Now get out there and start weeding for dinner!



Jerusalem Artichokes

These beautiful sunshine-yellow flowers have a secret! Their roots are delicious! Jerusalem artichoke roots can be harvested, cleaned and roasted just like potatoes! Yum!!



Miner's Lettuce

This 'lettuce', is a ground plant that can tossed with dressing, or thrown into a sandwich or wrap. These greens are crispy and delicious. Make sure to pick them in a place where people have not been walking a lot.

How do you know it's the right thing?

It's important to be sure that you're harvesting the right kind of plant before you eat it. Use online guides and books to check that you've got the right plant. Our Roseburg library has books you can check out on local mushrooms and plants for identification!

You can also refer to websites that show pictures and descriptions of the plants: [like this one!](#)

Where and when do I harvest?

Where and when, will depend on what you are looking for. Things like morel mushrooms can usually only be found for a brief time in the spring right after the snow melts. Other plants don't produce edible fruits or roots until the late summer and fall! Use the link above, or local books to learn when the best time is to go hunting!

It's important to be careful of the local environment when looking for wild food. If you are going off the trail or main road, make sure that you have a compass or other way of navigating back to where you started. Leave No Trace when you are out and about. Don't tread on plants you can avoid, leave no trash, and make sure to not harvest everything you see, or there will be none left for the local wildlife. You can learn more about the Leave No Trace principles by clicking on the green icon!



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EXPERIMENT 1: Try something local!

One important thing about foraging in our forests is that you are connecting with foods that are local to our area. You are eating something that wasn't grown in another state or country to be shipped and flown to a local grocery store. Most of the fruits and vegetables at our stores come from far far away! Eating local is a chance to help our watershed by not putting lots of vehicle emissions in the air.

Food also tastes better when it hasn't had to travel thousands of miles to reach our plate. You get to eat food, sometimes the same day, that it's picked from the ground!



Here are some ways to try local food without foraging in the forest:

1. Try visiting a local Farmers Market! We have markets in [Roseburg](#), [Sutherlin](#), [Canyonville](#) and [Lookingglass](#). But you can also reach out to local farms directly to see if they have deliveries or pickup locations in your town!
2. Grow food at home! My friend Halie has been hard at work making [garden videos](#) to get you started with veggie growing at home!
3. Spend a summer afternoon picking your own food at U-Pick farm. Local berry and vegetable farms all around Douglas County let you come to their farms and pick berries, produce, apples and more! Just make sure to follow [COVID-19 guidelines](#), and bring your own collecting baskets and wash your hands before and after!

ACTIVITY 2: Berry Picking!

You will need:

- A basket or bag for collecting
- Gloves and long-sleeve shirt to avoid thorns

Instructions:

Head out on your favorite trail or forest road in search of berries! Most berries have 3 leaves on the end of each stem. But remember that poison oak also has 3 leaves like this, so make sure there are no red stems on the plant!

Blackberries will begin getting ripe in July and August. Strawberries are found in the early spring, May and June! Different elevations will have ripe berries at different times of year because of temperature changes.

See what your family can find at different places! Make sure to record your successful finds in your journal so you know where and when to go back and look next year ☺

You can just eat your berries right there off the bush or turn them into smoothies, pies



Salmon Berry

These berries are orange-yellow when ripe! A fun twist on a blackberry or raspberry.



Wild Strawberry

These berries have the same ground leaves but the berries themselves are much smaller! Probably too late to find any this year, but keep a look out next spring around Memorial Day weekend.



Blackberries and Marion berries

Nothing beats a delicious mouthful of Pacific Northwest blackberries! Nom nom nom. They are everywhere – especially the Himalayan blackberry (which is an invasive species that ‘escaped’ from farms in Northern Oregon). Make sure not to pick or eat blackberries near roads or train tracks – these areas are sprayed with chemicals to keep away plants and those chemicals sink into the blackberries! So, make sure you are safe while foraging!

Thanks for conducting science with me for this Home Explorer activity from Umpqua Watersheds Education Program.
Join me for new activities posted every week! Bon appetite!

- Ms. Robyn

