

Foraging in Schools

Here are some of the plants you are most likely to find growing in your school grounds or in your local community. Remember never eat something unless you are sure of what it is!

1. Elder Tree

Elder Flowers



©Bob Peterson via Flickr

Elder Leaves



©Melissa McMasters via Flickr

Elder Berries



©Tom Anderson via Flickr

Elder Trees are commonly found growing in schools, gardens and parks throughout Ireland. The small, white flowers which appear in early summer are edible and are often used to make Elderflower cordial. Their berries appear in autumn but should not be eaten as the seeds within them contain toxins. They grow in bunches and are dark purple in colour.

2. Nettles



Nettles are found growing throughout Ireland and they are generally unwelcome because of their painful stings! However they can be (carefully) picked and eaten. Both the stalk and leaves are edible and can be made into soup, pesto or tea. Nettles grow highest during the summer but they can be found year round, often near hedgerows.

3. Blackberry Bush



Blackberry Flowers



Thorny Bramble



Blackberries

Blackberries are one of the most popular wild foods. They grow on bushes which are often growing over or through hedges or fences around school grounds. The berries appear in autumn and will be dark purple when ripe. If they won't twist off easily they are probably not ready to be eaten!

3. Hazel Tree

Hazel Nuts



©nz_willoher via Flickr

Hazel Leaves



©Siaron Jones via Flickr

Hazel Catkins



©Peter Stenzel via Flickr

Hazel Trees are native to Ireland and are often found growing on school grounds. They produce edible nuts in Autumn which are difficult to spot as they grow under leaves. The nuts are found inside a green covering and then within a hard shell.

4. Rosehips

Hedgerow Rose Hips



©Keith Ewing via Flickr

Dog Rose Hips



©Steve p2008 via Flickr

The fruit produced by Rose bushes are called hips. There are many varieties including Hedgerow and Dog Roses. Hedgerow roses have a distinctive bright pink flower. Its hips are rounded and appear similar to small tomatoes. Dog Roses are found throughout Ireland but are less common than the hedgerow roses. The flowers are a light pink. The hips are more slender and pointed than those of the hedgerow roses. The skin of both hips are edible but contain itchy seeds inside which should not be eaten. The skin is often used to make tea or a sweet syrup but can be eaten raw and tastes a bit like an apple.

5. Sweet Chestnuts



Photo©Garry Knight via Flickr



Photo©Rhian via Flickr

Sweet Chestnuts are a relative of the more familiar Horse Chestnut (Conker). These chestnuts are edible. There are often several nuts inside the spiky green shell. The nuts are best eaten roasted with the brown skin then peeled off. The trees can be distinguished from the Horse Chestnuts as they are shorter and stockier with long pointed leaves. The sweet chestnut shells are also flatter than their Conker cousins.

6. Dandelions



Dandelion



Dandelion Seeds

Dandelions are often considered a weed as they spring up in grasslands around the country. Their distinctive yellow flower, and fluffy seed head make them easy to identify. Their flower, leaves and roots are all edible. Leaves can be placed directly into a salad (but can be a little bitter) while their flower can be used to make a syrup and roots can even be made into a coffee.

7. Wild Garlic



Wild Garlic is best identified by its strong smell. It grows in late spring, close to the ground. Both the flowers and the leaves of wild garlic are edible but it is the leaves which give off the distinctive “garlicky smell”. Its relative is bulb garlic which is what we buy in shops.

8. Fuchsia



Fuchsia Berries



Fuchsia is not a native plant but it is seen growing in hedgerows throughout Ireland. It flowers between July and October. The purple berries appear in autumn and can be eaten directly or made into a jam or tart. It is more widely known for breaking off the top of the stem leading to the flowers and sucking its sweet nectar.

9. Wild Cherry

Wild Cherry Tree



©Hornbeam Arts via Flickr

Wild Cherry Flowers



©Anna via Flickr

Wild Cherries



©Andy Kraemer via Flickr

There are two species of native cherry trees in Ireland. Both have edible fruit. The wild cherry is the more common of the two. Although the fruit is not as sweet as the cherries you may be used to from the supermarket they are quite tasty. Their pale pink flowers make them easy to identify appear in spring. The cherries follow in summer.

10. Scots Pine Needles

Scots Pine Cones



©Peter Birch via Flickr

Scots Pine Needles



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Although they do not look very appetizing pine needles from a variety of pine trees can be used to make pine needle tea. This has been used for hundreds of years as a medicine. Pine needles are full of vitamins especially vitamin C. Add a handful to simmering water and leave for about 20 minutes to brew. Scots Pine is native to Ireland and is shown above.

Edible Plant Hunt



Hazelnut



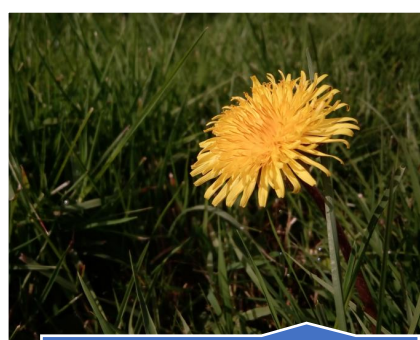
Scots Pine



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