

WILD GARLIC: A SPRINGTIME TREASURE OF THE BRITISH COUNTRYSIDE

DESCRIPTION & HABITAT

Wild garlic (*Allium ursinum*), also known as ramsons, is a vibrant perennial plant that carpets UK woodlands, riverbanks, and shady hedgerows each spring. Recognisable by its lush, spear-shaped leaves and delicate white star-shaped flowers, it emits a distinctive garlicky aroma—a hallmark of its identity. Thriving from March to June, this seasonal gem is a forager's delight, symbolising the awakening of nature after winter. Wild Garlic is a deciduous bulb and dies down to overwinter.

CULINARY USES

A cornerstone of the British foragers' springtime cuisine, wild garlic's tender leaves and blossoms add a fresh, pungent kick to dishes. Its versatility shines in:

- Pesto & Sauces: Swap basil for wild garlic leaves to create a vibrant pesto, perfect for pasta, grilled meats, or crusty bread.
- Soups & Stews: Infuse soups (notably wild garlic soup) with its earthy flavour, or stir chopped leaves into creamy sauces.
- Salads & Garnishes: Young leaves add zest to salads, while flowers make edible confetti for cheeses, risottos, or charcuterie boards.
- Butters & Oils: Blend into compound butter or steep in oil for a gourmet twist on everyday staples.
- Baking: Incorporate into savoury scones, tarts, or bread for a fragrant lift.
- Pair with spring lamb, asparagus, or fresh goat's cheese for a true taste of the season.

MEDICINAL BENEFITS

Traditionally valued for its health properties, wild garlic is rich in vitamin C, antioxidants, and allicin (a compound linked to heart health). It's believed to support digestion, detoxification, and immune function, with historical use as a tonic for circulatory ailments.

FORAGING RESPONSIBLY

When foraging, harvest leaves sparingly, leaving bulbs intact to ensure regrowth. Avoid confusion with toxic lookalikes like lily of the valley by crushing a leaf to release its characteristic garlic scent. Always have the landowner's permission and follow local guidelines, as some protected areas may restrict picking. It is illegal to dig up the bulbs or disturb the roots in the wild. Remove any foraging restrictions by growing your own supply using our plants.

A SEASONAL CELEBRATION

Wild garlic epitomises the UK's love affair with seasonal, local ingredients. Whether foraged or found at farmers' markets, it's a fleeting luxury that transforms spring dishes into vibrant, aromatic feasts. Embrace its bold flavour and versatility—while respecting nature's balance—to savour this quintessential British herb at its peak.

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HOW TO GROW WILD GARLIC IN THE UK

Here's how to cultivate your own patch of wild garlic.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT LOCATION

Wild garlic thrives in conditions mimicking its natural woodland habitat. Opt for a shady or partially shaded spot, such as under deciduous trees or along north-facing borders. It prefers moist, well-drained soil rich in organic matter - mix in compost or leaf mould to boost fertility. While it tolerates a range of soil types, slightly acidic to neutral pH levels are ideal.

CARE AND MAINTENANCE

- Watering: Keep soil consistently moist, especially during dry spells. Avoid waterlogging.
- Mulching: Apply leaf mulch in autumn to retain moisture and mimic woodland conditions.
- Feeding: Not usually required if planted in rich soil. A light compost top-up in spring can help.
- Control: Wild garlic spreads via bulbs and seeds. Remove flower heads after blooming if you want to limit self-seeding. In perfect conditions it can become invasive but it is easy to dig out from where it's not wanted – and as a bonus use the leaves you have dug up!

HARVESTING

- When: Leaves are best picked in spring (March–June) before flowers bloom. Harvest sparingly in the first year to allow plants to establish.
- How: Snip leaves at the base, leaving bulbs intact for regrowth. Flowers (April–June) are also edible—add to salads for a mild garlic kick.

IMPORTANT NOTES

- Identification: Ensure you're harvesting true wild garlic. Its broad, glossy leaves and white star-shaped flowers differ from toxic lookalikes like lily of the valley. Crush a leaf to confirm its garlic scent.
- Sustainability: Never uproot wild plants from natural habitats. Source bulbs/seeds ethically from nurseries. Our plants have been grown from cultivated stock.
- Legal Considerations: Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, it's illegal to uproot wild garlic without the landowner's permission.

FINAL TIPS

Wild garlic is low-maintenance once established, returning yearly with vibrant green foliage. Perfect for shady gardens or wildflower patches, it also attracts pollinators. With patience and the right spot, you'll enjoy a seasonal bounty of this quintessentially British herb.