

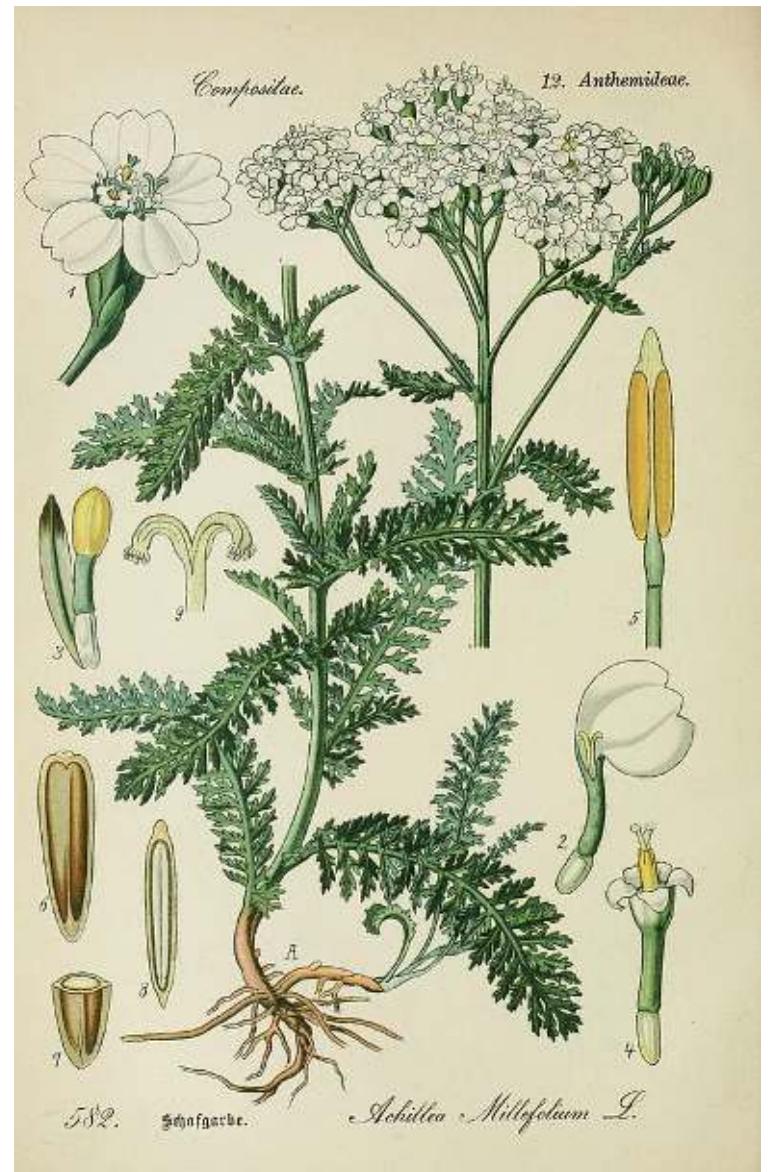
Medicinal and Edible Plants at SECAD

Yarrow

The leaves can be used in almost any dish as a vegetable, added to soups and sauces, or simply boiled and simmered in butter as a side dish. For yarrow tea, put a 1-2 teaspoons of dried yarrow flowers in a tea pot, let it sit for 20 minutes, strain into a cup.

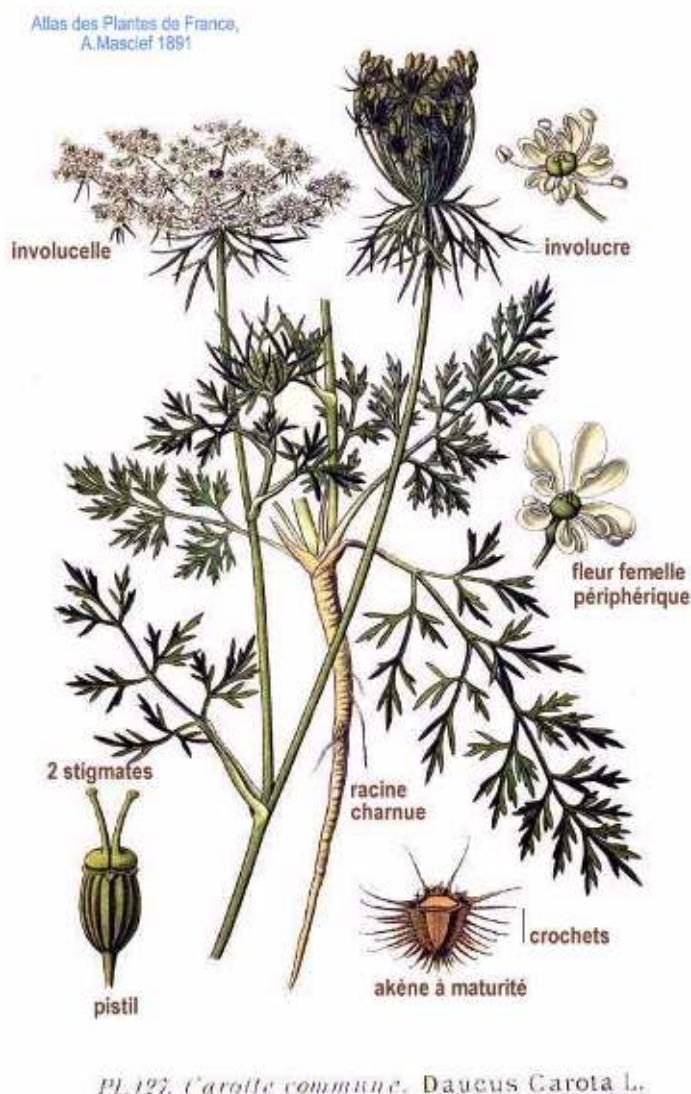
Yarrow has also been used for many centuries as a way to stop bleeding. Of the total of 125 records of the use of yarrow in British or Irish folk medicine, 47, come broadly into that category. The greatest number of these (16) are for staunching bleeding from wounds, cuts, scratches or sores, usually by means of an ointment but sometimes by merely applying the fresh leaves as a poultice

The Science: Study confirms that the essential oil of Yarrow possesses antioxidant and antimicrobial properties in vitro.



Wild Carrot

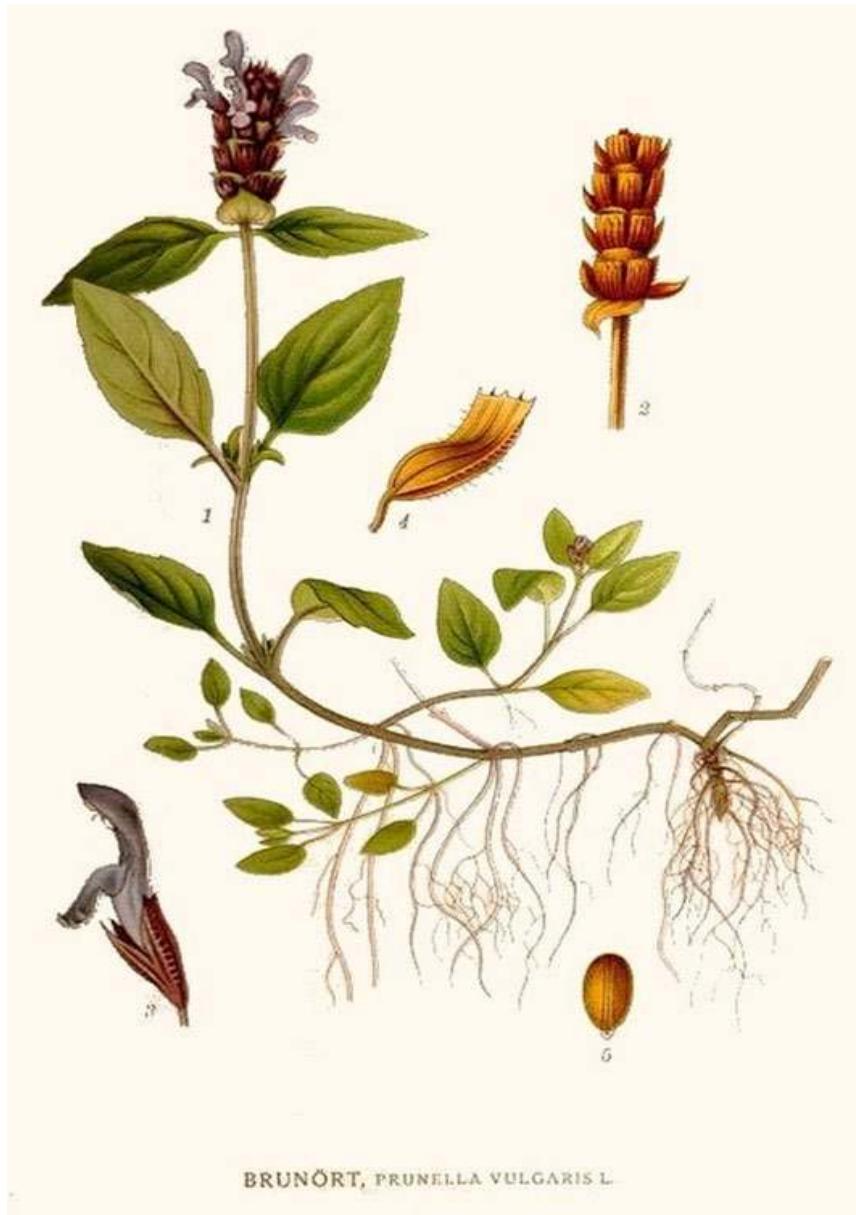
Leaves, roots, flowers, and seeds are edible. The flower clusters can be battered and fried, the aromatic seed is used as a flavouring in stews, etc. In Ireland the root of wild carrot was traditionally eaten and savoured for its sweet taste. The carrot itself is tough and stringy but has a strong carrot flavour so can be cooked in soups or stews and removed before consumption. The younger roots from the first years growth are not as tough but are still quite fibrous. The key is to find them at the end of their first year before the roots grow woody their second year. Often that woody part can be peeled off and the root made edible. **CAUTION** This is not a plant for novice foragers – the very poisonous and common Hemlock looks very similar to carrot.



Self-Heal

In the seventeenth century Nicholas Culpeper wrote of it as a wound herb 'whereby when you are hurt you may heal yourself'. Self-Heal has had three principal but distinct functions in folk medicine: to staunch bleeding, to ease respiratory complaints and to treat heart trouble. For the first of those the plant was once highly valued in official medicine as well, but by the eighteenth century it largely fell into disuse. It was also used as a mouthwash and gargle, and in the sixteenth century believers in the Doctrine of Signatures saw in the corolla (flower) the shape of an open mouth with swollen glands.

The Science: An experimental study revealed that Self-Heal showed significant wound healing and anti-inflammatory activities. Ursolic acid, chlorogenic acid, and rosmarinic acid were found to be responsible for the anti-inflammatory and wound healing effects.

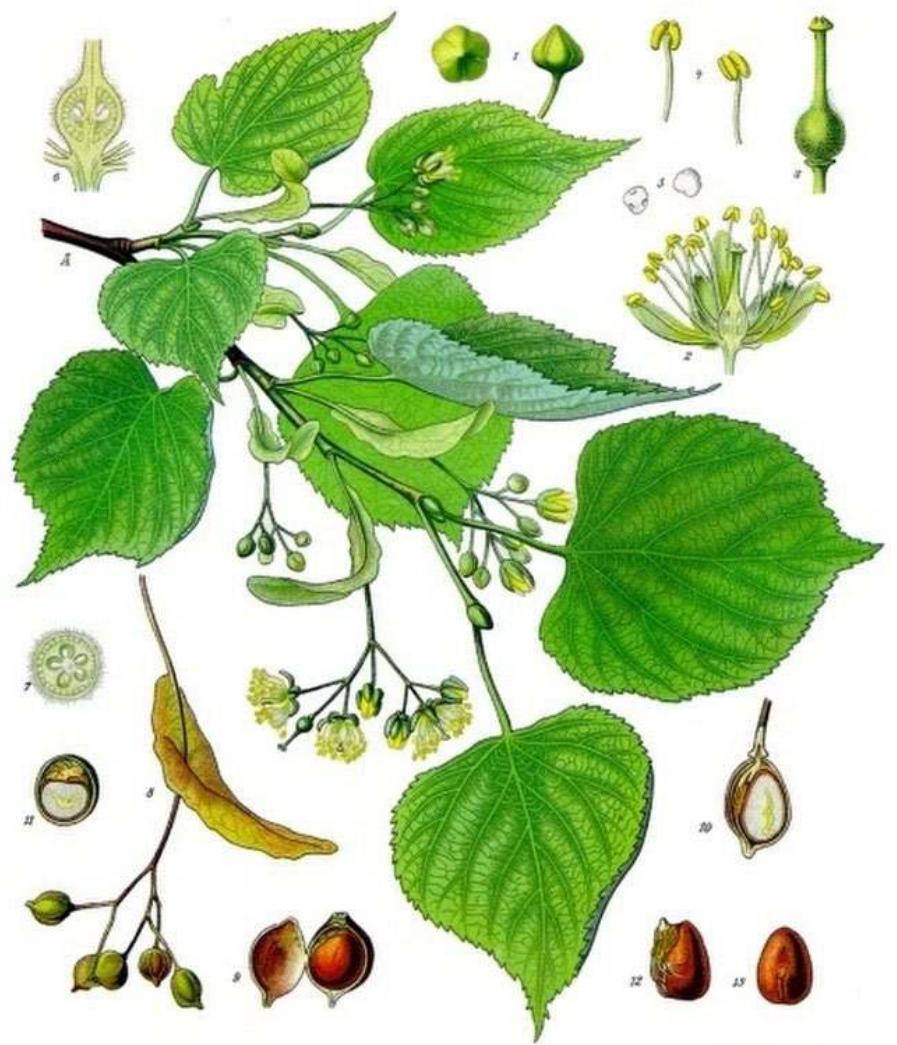


Linden Tree or Lime

The leaves collected in early spring when still soft and pale green are excellent eaten straight from the tree, tossed into a mixed salad, or sandwiched between two slices of bread. Their subtle nutty flavour and silky texture make them the ideal alternative to lettuce.

Linden tea is made by brewing the dried flowers, and sometimes the leaves and bark. The tea has been used in folk medicine across cultures to relieve high blood pressure, calm anxiety, and soothe digestion.

The Science: Small leafed Lime exhibited a high content of flavanols O-glycosides (mono- and di) quercetin and kaempferol derivatives and tiliroside. Its medicinal use as anxiolytic (drug used to relieve anxiety) could be attributed to the presence of these flavonoids.



St. John's-Wort

The plant usually begins to flower around the 24th of June, the feast day of St. John the Baptist. The principal applications of St John's Wort in folk medicine has arisen from its astringency which helps to staunch bleeding from scratches and more serious wounds. Curiously, the property of St John's-Wort which has lately won it much publicity, its mild antidepressant action, features very little in the folk records of the British Isles.

As an antidepressant St. John's-Wort is thought to work by keeping the brain from using up neurotransmitters like serotonin, dopamine, GABA, and norepinephrine. As a result, the neurotransmitters are more effectively used in the brain. This can have an antidepressant and overall feel-good effect in the brain.

The Science : Tea made from St Johns Wort showed antibacterial effects against gram-positive bacteria.



Ragwort

Ragwort is considered both invasive and as a weed under Ireland's 1937 Noxious Weeds Order and landowners are required to control its spread. Sheep and goats seem able to consume a fair amount but horses and cattle are said to be harmed particularly when the plant is dried in hay/silage as they do not readily eat it fresh. The plant contains pyrrolizidine alkaloids, highly toxic to the liver.

Ragwort was considered good for treating coughs, colds, sore throats, rheumatism and sore joints. The bottom leaves were used in many places as the basis for poultices, and the juice was used for curing cuts, sores and inflammations, including burns, scalds and boils.

Many insects, such as leaf beetles and micromoths, depend either on ragwort as a larval foodplant or as a nectar source. The most well-known is the Cinnabar moth (pictured), but up to 30 British and Irish insects are entirely reliant on ragwort as a food.



Common Sorrel or Sour Savages!

The green edible leaves and stalks are delicious with a lemony or sharp apple taste. This plant contains Oxalic acid, similar to rhubarb, giving it its' sour taste - if you ingest too much of this acid you can upset your stomach. Saying that, you would have to eat a serious amount of common sorrel to get to this point. It should be avoided by anyone with kidney disease, kidney stones, rheumatoid arthritis, or gout, or those taking blood thinners.

Fish served in a sorrel sauce is a staple of French cuisine. The sauce is especially good with salmon fillets, but also complements halibut, cod and sole. There are numerous variations on sorrel sauce. A simple recipe: Melt about 100g of butter in a pan, add 2 good handfuls of any of the sorrel, leaves only with stalks removed, and cook on a low heat until the sorrel has gone soft then stir in 150ml of sour cream (you can use any other cream of your choice). Add salt, pepper and lemon juice to taste and serve.



Ox-Eye Daisy

Ox-eye daisy produces up to 26,000 seeds per plant, which can remain highly viable for up to 39 years, although the percentage of viability drops after 6 years. Oxeye daisy is a palatable salad vegetable. The petals, stem and leaves can be eaten raw in salads or sandwiches or added to soups and stews. Can be bitter so use sparingly. While oxeye daisy can be eaten as a hiker's snack, it is advised not to eat the yellow centre of the flower as it may cause indigestion.

Ox-eye daisy is used for conditions of the respiratory tract, wound healing, and various other purposes, but there is no good scientific evidence to support any use.

Dandelion

Nearly the entire plant can be consumed in one way or another. The only inedible part is the stem, which contains a very bitter, milky substance. Young greens picked before the plant flowers are the best, but they can be picked and eaten year-round. They can be used fresh in salads, or chopped and used in place of chives on top of mashed or baked potatoes. They can also be cooked and used in similar ways as spinach, such as sautéed, stir-fried or creamed.

The Science: Dandelion contains important amounts of dietary fibre and potassium, as well as an adequate Ca/P ratio, 1:1, approximately, that matches the levels suggested by the Recommended Dietary Allowances. High levels of essential fatty acids, specially linolenic acid (important for reduced inflammation and prevention of certain chronic diseases) were also found.



Ribwort and Broadleaf Plantain

Leaves, flower buds, seeds are edible. Leaves are used as a salad green, vegetable or potherb (leafy herb that is cooked for use as greens). The flower buds of Ribwort Plantain have a distinct mushroom taste and are delicious fried in butter. The nutty-flavoured seeds can be ground to make flour and are also a good source of protein. But beware, eating too much plantain seed may have a laxative effect.

Its primary use in folk medicine has been as a healer of wounds, and it was once valued as a cure for animal bites and stings.

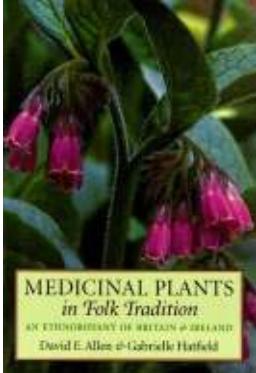
The Science: Plantain leaves are rich in tannins which can help in the healing of grazes and wounds. Broadleaf Plantain extracts showed a high presence of steroids and triperthenes, which are related with anti-inflammatory activity.

Broadleaf
Plantain



Ribwort
Plantain

Resources



Medicinal Plants in Folk Tradition: An Ethnobotany of Britain & Ireland.

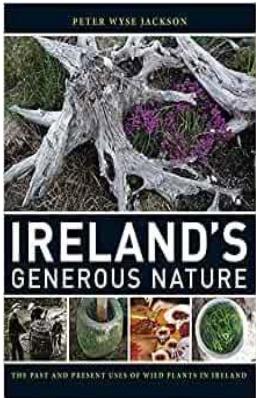
David E. Allen and Gabrielle Hatfield

First hand accounts of the medicinal uses of more than 400 species as told by the plain folk of Britain and Ireland. Rich in lore and practical wisdom of the ages.



Food for Free. Richard Mabey

The classic. A complete guide to the edible species that grow around us. Over 100 edible plants are listed, fully illustrated and described, together with recipes and other fascinating details on their use throughout the ages.



Ireland Generous Nature. Peter Wyse Jackson

Comprehensive account of the historical and present-day uses of wild plant species in Ireland. It records a wealth of traditional knowledge about Irish plant use, knowledge that has been disappearing fast. More than 1500 wild plants are detailed in a systematic list, which gives both their Irish and English names.

Websites

<https://www.eatweeds.co.uk/>

<https://www.wildfooduk.com/>

YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/c/UKWILDCRAFTS>

<https://www.youtube.com/c/WildFoodUK1>

Plant Identification

Apps: PlantNet and Flora Incognita

Book: The Wildflowers of Ireland : A Field Guide. Zoe Devlin

Websites: <http://www.wildflowersofireland.net/>

<https://www.irishwildflowers.ie/index.html>