

Wild Edible Plants & Mushrooms of Thetis Island

Compiled by Aislinn Cottell



Mindful Foraging Guidelines

Wild foraging is a wonderful way to explore nature and local food options. The following document contains a (non-exclusive) list of edible plants and mushrooms that grow on Thetis Island. When foraging, please adhere to the following mindfulness principles to ensure your safety, and the health of the community and natural environment you are foraging in.

1) **Be sure of identification;** always be certain as to the correct identification of your foraged plants before ingesting, and when in doubt, err on the side of caution. When experimenting with species new to you, even if certain of identification, consume only small portions initially in case of any allergic or intolerant responses.

2) **Respect nature;** take care when harvesting that you do not disturb the surrounding habitat unduly, or harvest more than nature can replenish. Keep in mind that you may not be the only forager in the area, and that your animal neighbors need to eat too! Do not pick the roots of plants (unless you are harvesting them intentionally) and do not harvest endangered species. Use a clean knife and/or scissors to avoid excess damage to plants.

3) **Avoid polluted areas;** for your health, avoid foraging in potentially contaminated locations such as busy roads, industrial sites, or agricultural land.

4) **Do not trespass;** always gain express permission before harvesting on private property.

Happy foraging!

Disclaimer

Please note that poisonous plants and especially fungi often resemble and grow next to edible species. Some edible species may have toxic parts. This document serves merely as an introductory guide to some of the edible plants and fungi of Thetis Island and should be used in parallel with other resources and expert advice. Never eat anything unless you are absolutely sure of its identification and edibility.

It is the responsibility of the forager to correctly identify and process the plants and fungi described in this handbook. Adult supervision is strongly recommended for children and youth using this handbook.

ThINC and the author of this manual assume no responsibility whatsoever for any adverse effects encountered by an individual using this handbook.



Photo by David Reay



Photo by David Reay

"Black Cap" *Rubus leucodermis*

Description: Deciduous shrub growing 2-3 m tall, with prickly shoots. Leaves are similar to raspberry, with a pointed tip and irregular serrated edge. Flowers are white, with five small petals and a large pistil.

Edibility: Berries can be harvested in July-August.

Precautions: None.



"Broadleaf Maple" *Acer macrophyllum*

Description: Deciduous tree growing to between 20-50 m. Large leaves have five palmate lobes. Greenish-yellow flowers grow in dense pendulous racemes.

Edibility: Sap can be tapped and made into syrup. Young flower racemes can be harvested and eaten fresh or cooked.

Precautions: None.



Photo by Charlotte Fesnoux



"Chicory" *Cichorium intybus*

Description: Perennial herbaceous plant with tough stems growing to 100 cm tall. Leaves are lanceolate and unlobed. Daisy-like flowers are light blue or purple.

Edibility: Roots can be baked, roasted, or dried and ground as a coffee substitute. Leaves can be eaten raw or cooked.

Precautions: None.



Photo by Ellen Cerny



Photo by Ellen Cerny

"Cleavers" *Gallium aparine*

Description: Annual herbaceous plant with creeping 'sticky' stems that can grow over 1 m. Leaves are narrowly oblanceolate, borne in whorls of six to eight. Small, white flowers are star-shaped.

Edibility: Leaves and stems can be cooked and eaten before fruits appear. Fruits can be dried and roasted as a coffee substitute.

Precautions: Some people have an allergic reaction to cleavers; do not consume if rubbing a small amount on your skin results in rash.



"Common Burdock"

Arctium minus

Description: Biennial plant with stalks growing to 1.5 m. Large dark green leaves are long and ovate to heart-shaped. Purple spikey flowers resemble thistles.

Edibility: The stalk and roots of first-year plants can be cooked and eaten.

Precautions: Considered mildly toxic due to potential diuretic effects, and often grows near and resembles highly toxic nightshade. Some have reported allergies to flower burrs.



"Common Cattail"

Typha latifolia

Description: Perennial herbaceous plant growing to 3 m. Dark green leaves are long and narrow, growing from a single jointless stem. Flowers form a dense sausage-shaped mass.

Edibility: Young inner shoots and leaf bases can be eaten raw or cooked. Developing flower spike can be boiled like corn, while rhizomes and pollen can be made into flour.

Precautions: Can resemble the toxic iris lily; take care when harvesting. The cattail's brown "sausage" flower is a reliable identifier.



Photo by Ellen Cerny



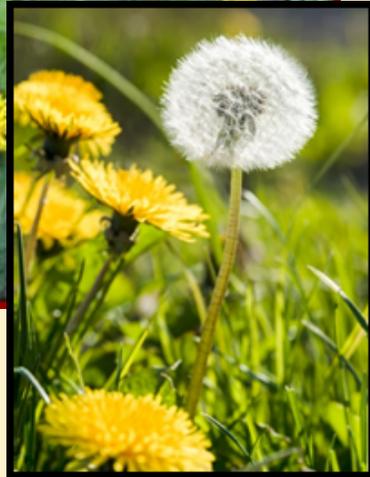
Photo by Ellen Cerny

"Common Chickweed" *Stellaria media*

Description: Annual or perennial herbaceous plant with sparsely hairy stems growing to 40 cm. Leaves are oval. Small flowers are white with five deeply lobbed petals.

Edibility: Leaves and stems can be cooked or eaten raw.

Precautions: Not recommended for pregnant and breastfeeding individuals, as chickweed contains chemicals which may be toxic to some animals, although it is unlikely that humans would be affected.



"Common Dandelion" *Taraxacum officinale*

Description: Perennial herbaceous plant with stems growing to 40 cm. Leaves are oblanceolate and toothed. Large flowers are yellow with many densely packed petals.

Edibility: Leaves can be eaten cooked or raw. Flowers can be used to make wine or jam. Ground root can be used as a coffee substitute.

Precautions: None.



"Fireweed"

Chamaenerion angustifolium

Description: Perennial herbaceous plant with stalks growing to 2.4 m. Leaves are thin and lanceolate. Purple flowers have 8 petals, alternating thin and circular.

Edibility: Young shoots can be cooked. Root can be harvested and cooked before the plant flowers. Flowers can be made into jelly.

Precautions: The toxic "Madagascar ragwort" is also known by the common name of "fireweed," although the two plants do not resemble each other.



"Lamb's Quarters"

Chenopodium berlandieri

Description: Annual herbaceous plant with stalks growing to 3 m. Leaves are varied in shape from diamond shaped to thin and lanceolate. Small white flowers grow on a densely packed stalk.

Edibility: Leaves can be eaten fresh or cooked. Seeds can be harvested and used as cereal or ground into flour, or grown and eaten as sprouts.

Precautions: Young plants can grow near and resemble nightshade.



"Licorice Fern"

Polypodium glycyrrhiza

Description: Deciduous fern growing to 60 cm. Finely toothed fronds are decentralized, often found growing from mossy rocks and logs.

Edibility: The licorice-flavoured rhizome can be chewed or brewed for tea.

Precautions: Moderation is advised, as some fern species have been known to contain carcinogens.



"Miner's Lettuce"

Claytonia perfoliata

Description: Annual herbaceous plant growing to 40 cm. Soft, spade-shaped leaves grow from a long, thin stem. Small white or pink flowers bloom above a pair of leaves that connect around the stem to form a circular lily-pad-like shape.

Edibility: Leaves and flowers can be eaten raw or cooked.

Precautions: Should be eaten in moderation, as wild miner's lettuce can sometimes accumulate toxic amounts of soluble oxalates.



"Nootka Rose"

Rosa nutkana

Description: Perennial shrub with thorned stalks growing to 3 m. Leaves are oblong and pointed with toothed edges. Small pink flowers have five petals.

Edibility: Hips, leaves, and petals can be harvested and made into tea, jams, and jellies.

Precautions: None.



Photo by Charlotte Fesnoux



Photo by David Reay

"Oregon Grape"

Mahonia nervosa

Description: Evergreen shrub growing to 2 m, but commonly under 30 cm. Holly-like leaves are strongly toothed and shiny. Flowers are tightly clustered with six yellow petals.

Edibility: Berries can be harvested from June-August and made into jam or other dishes.

Precautions: Fruit is very tart, and best eaten processed or mixed with other berries.



"Ox-Eye Daisy" *Leucanthemum vulgare*



Description: Perennial herbaceous plant with tough stems growing to 100 cm tall. Leaves are lanceolate and unlobed. Daisy-like flowers are light blue or purple.

Edibility: Roots can be baked, roasted, or dried and ground as a coffee substitute. Leaves can be eaten raw or cooked.

Precautions: None.



"Pineapple Weed" *Matricaria discoidea*



Description: Annual herbaceous plant growing to 40 cm. Frilly leaves are pinnately dissected. Yellow flower is densely packed and cone shaped, with no petals.

Edibility: Entire plant can be eaten raw or cooked, or steeped for tea. Flower heads can be dried and ground for flour.

Precautions: None.



"Plantain" (Broadleaf) *Plantago major*



Description: Perennial herbaceous plant growing to 30 cm in diameter. Leaves are oval shaped with five to nine large veins. Small greenish-brown flowers grow densely on a tall spike.

Edibility: Roots and leaves can be eaten raw or cooked. Seeds can be gathered and ground into flour.

Precautions: None.



"Plantain" (Ribwort) *Plantago lanceolata*



Description: Perennial herbaceous plant growing to 40 cm. Leaves are thin and lanceolate, with 3-5 obvious veins. Flowers are ovoid with many long white stamens.

Edibility: Roots and leaves can be eaten raw, cooked, or made into tea.

Precautions: None.



"Red Huckleberry" *Vaccinium parvifolium*

Description: Deciduous shrub growing to 4 m. Bright green shoots grow horizontally from main stem, creating large flat cross-sections. Small leaves are ovate to oblong. Flowers are yellow to pinkish-white. Often found growing from rotting stumps and logs.

Edibility: Berries can be harvested in July-August.

Precautions: None.



Photo by Aislinn Cottell



"Salal" *Gaulthoria shallon*

Description: Evergreen shrub growing to 5 m. Leathery, egg-shaped leaves are finely serrated. Pink to white hanging flowers are small, urn-shaped, and slightly sticky.

Edibility: Berries can be harvested in July-August.

Precautions: None.



"Salmon Berry"

Rubus spectabilis

Description: Deciduous shrub growing to 4 m, with small thorns. Diamond shaped, serrated leaves are trifoliate. Flowers are pinkish-purple with five petals.

Edibility: Berries can be harvested from May-July. Young shoots can be harvested in early spring and eaten raw or cooked.

Precautions: Be frugal when harvesting shoots, as new growth is fruit-bearing.



"Sea asparagus"

Salicornia

Description: Family of annual herbaceous plants growing to 8 cm. Green or red smooth branched stems appear jointed and grow prostrate or erect. Yellowish white flower grows in a branching, globular clump.

Edibility: Leaves and stalk can be eaten raw, cooked, or dried and made into a salt substitute.

Precautions: None.



"Stinging Nettle"

Urtica dioica

Description: Perennial herbaceous plant growing to 2 m. Soft green leaves are spade shaped and strongly serrated. Plants are best harvested in early spring when young.

Edibility: Leaves and stalk can be eaten cooked or dried and made into tea.

Precautions: Fresh leaves produce a stinging rash on skin. Take care to avoid contact when harvesting, and always cook thoroughly before eating.



"Sweet Cicely"

Myrrhis odorata

Description: Family of annual herbaceous plants growing to 8 cm. Green or red smooth branched stems appear jointed and grow prostrate or erect. Yellowish white flower grows in a branching, globular clump.

Edibility: Leaves and stalk can be eaten raw, cooked, or dried and made into a salt substitute.

Precautions: None.



"Thimble Berry"

Rubus parviflorus

Description: Deciduous shrub growing to 2.5 m. Soft, fuzzy leaves are similar to maple, with five pointed lobes. Flowers have five white petals and multiple yellow stamens.

Edibility: Berries can be harvested from June-July.

Precautions: None.



"Trailing Blackberry"

Rubus ursinus

Description: Deciduous mounding vine growing up to 2 m. Prickly stems are reproductive in the second year, small flowers have five narrow white petals.

Edibility: Berries can be harvested from August-September.

Precautions: None.



"Wild Strawberry"

Fragaria vesca

Description: Perennial herbaceous plant with trifoliate light green, toothed leaves. Spreads mostly through runners. Flowers are small with five white petals.

Edibility: Berries are ever-bearing can be harvested from May-October depending on weather conditions.

Precautions: None.



"Golden Chanterelle" *Cantharellus formosus*

Description: Solitary fungus growing to 14 cm wide. Flesh is orange/yellow to light brown or salmon. Meaty, funnel-shaped cap is smooth on top with curled, wavy edges. Underside is lined with "false gill" ridges that run down into a slightly rough stipe which tapers seamlessly from the cap.

Edibility: Can be eaten cooked; should be brushed clean but not washed after harvesting.

Precautions: Has several non-edible look-alike fungi, take care when harvesting.



"Lobster Mushroom" *Hypomyces lactifluorum*

Description: Parasitic fungi that grows on certain species of mushroom, turning them a reddish-orange colour and forming a hard outer shell.

Edibility: Can be eaten cooked. Older specimens become mealy and acquire unpleasant flavour; avoid if outer shell feels soft to the touch.

Precautions: None. Lobster mushrooms have no close look-alikes on the West Coast and are one of the safer edible fungi to identify.



"Shaggy Mane" *Cantharellus formosus*

Description: Solitary fungus growing to 15.5 cm tall. White, bell-shaped "shaggy" cap is long and cylindrical, covering most of the stem when young. Stipe is has a loose ring. Cap shrivels upwards and turns black during decay.

Edibility: Can be eaten cooked; should be prepared soon after harvesting as it decays rapidly once picked.

Precautions: Has several non-edible look-alike fungi, take care when harvesting.