The format of the pages in this E-guide are designed so that the images can be printed out on standard 10 x 15 cm photo paper, then ring bound. You may like to laminate your printouts for durability.

For wild food recipes check out the *Cooking with Weeds™* eBooks at www.wildfoodwisdom.co.uk
Whether you want to forage for fun, are a surfing visitor looking for a few cheap ingredients for the pot, or have 'survival' in mind, welcome to this freebie pocket-size Cornish foraging guide – courtesy of Wild Food School. It is designed to provide you with basic information on some of the most common edible wild veggie greens found in our part of the world.

Many more edible wild plants are available within Cornwall but they are too numerous for this small guide, and berries like those of the bramble and wild rose are not covered since they are too well known to most people. However, the species listed here will keep you alive in terms of greens, and some can be positively delicious when harvested at the right time of year and if properly prepared.

A general rule of thumb for harvesting the best wild greens is to gather them before the plants are in flower – but I recognise that that inevitably means you need to recognise a species before it IS in flower. Given a couple of years observation [I won’t say study] of the plants covered here and you should be able to spot them at whatever part of their life-cycle that you come across them.

Marcus Harrison
November, 2008
On the LEGAL side in the UK...

• it is illegal to uproot ANY wild plant without 'authorisation' (ie. permission)
• it is illegal to disturb or collect plant material from any PROTECTED wild plant
• the law of trespass exists, so gain permission before entering someone's land
• a plant is the 'property' of a landowner even if it is a weed, so you really should gain permission

On the ETIQUETTE side...

• only take what you need [in the case of small populations of less than 10 specimens of a wild plant, select a little foliage from each plant so the plant may continue to thrive]... of course with weeds like thistles, nettles and dandelion this is hardly a problem
• FOLIAGE, FLOWERS and FRUIT are the parts which may be gathered of species that are not 'protected'
• respect the environment that you are collecting from and leave it as undisturbed as possible
• during breeding seasons try not to disturb natural wildlife in the environment you gather from.
SAFE WILD PLANT FORAGING

• Only harvest wild plants from safe stocks. Study the landscape for sources of contamination [factory fallout, water run-off, effluent seepage etc.]. In parts of Cornwall there’s arsenic in the soil so that needs to be factored-in if you’re foraging a location on a regular basis.
• Avoid plants from busy roadsides, near landfill sites, or foul water.
• Avoid gathering plants from areas that may have recently been sprayed [look for telltale signs of wilting, chemical deposits on leaves, or even chemical drums].
• Avoid harvesting / consuming discoloured, diseased and dying plants. Never eat dead leaves.
• For more scarce plants only harvest what you need, leaving stocks behind to propagate [although invasive weeds covered in this guide hardly need help with that]. It is better to select a few leaves from several plants rather than take all the leaves from one plant specimen.
• Wash all your harvested plants thoroughly before use.
• Never consume a wild plant unless you are absolutely certain of its identification and its safety for consumption.
TESTING YOUR TOLERANCE

This is one of THE most important things to check before you launch yourself into eating any edible wild plants in quantity. Over a number of years WFS hands-on courses have shown that wild greens too, may cause reactions in some hypersensitive folks so please do be careful. I have come across folks who react to sorrel and to elderberries, while I personally don't tolerate hawthorn berries too well.

Most of the plants covered in this guide have been used as food for a long time or in survival situations before, so the real question is your own personal tolerance.

The first time you encounter one of the plants as a potential food source the recommendation is to take a small piece of the raw part, suitably peeled or whatever, bite on it a few times to get a little of the sap on your tongue and inner lip then spit everything out. Do not ingest. Wait for 20 to 30 minutes to see if you have any bad physical reaction – nausea, headache and so on.

Assuming your initial tolerance test is fine, you next need to try eating a piece of the plant. If it is one of the mild salad plants, then just consume a small leaf, or part of a larger one. If it is a bitter tasting plant or needs to be cooked then boil one
of the leaves, or specified part of the plant, and consume a very small portion. Again wait for about 30 minutes to an hour and keep an eye on your reaction.

If everything is fine then the suggestion is to go ahead with eating a small quantity - about a tablespoon or so - of the plant cooked. Once you’ve eaten the food just keep an eye on how you feel for 2 to 3 hours. If everything is okay, then you're in business. Whatever you do, never eat large amounts of any of the plants which follow without having tested your tolerance to it. Everyone is different and you may not be tolerant to something here.

There are also some plants that have constituents which can have a cumulative effect in your body [such as the oxalates] and should therefore not be consumed on a too regular basis or in large quantities. The sorrels are one such plant.
FORAGING IN CORNWALL...

This pocket guide contains pictures of around 24 species with edible parts, and I have also listed some other useful ones at the very back.

While Cornwall is full of many more traditional edible wild plants there are also imported ‘domesticated’ species grown in gardens and which may escape into the wild. Some of these more exotics plants, too, provide you with new flavours and textures to try.

I have omitted a number of common edible wild species because using some of them can be fraught with troubles, and this mini guide is designed to be simple. Dealing with the difficult plants is the sort of stuff I do in courses where there's more explanatory space and time.

However, the plants listed here will stand you in good stead. In fact if you know your dandelions, nettles, chickweed and thistles you can actually survive on those. Additional species just make life more interesting, and provide you with fallbacks when things are a bit thin on the ground.

You also need to 'manage' your wild food resources so that they are available to you on a regular basis. Leave some 'annuals' (plants which
flower and die in one year) to go to seed to provide next year's resource.

Biennials like burdock work on a two year life-cycle, while perennials last more than two years providing a food resource year after year. In fact perennials are the forager's best friend in terms of harvesting because once you know where a plant population is located it is then simply a matter of returning on a regular basis to harvest - saving time and energy. While this sounds like an ideal world note, however, that even perennials can be killed off by over-harvesting.

It is recommended that you don't pick any of the aquatic-type plants from urban or built up areas. Quite simply I don't think you can trust the cleanliness of water sources in such places, either in terms of pollutants or things like Weil's disease. Even in the great Outdoors I always recommend that any edible vegetation sourced from aquatic environments is cooked.

Lastly, parts of Cornwall have arsenic in the soil as a legacy of the tin industry. So you need to do a bit of research to check that your own local turf is not contaminated.

For wild food recipes check out the *Cooking with Weeds™* eBooks at www.wildfoodwisdom.co.uk.
ALEXANDERS - *Smyrnium olusatrum*

Alexanders is found frequently around Cornwall, particularly near the sea. As part of the *Umbellifer* family (which also contains carrots and parsley, but also poisonous hemlock and hemlock water-dropwort) you need to make sure that you have 100% positive identification.

It is a biennial, is frequently found along roadside verges which are damp, and all parts of the plant have a use (though remember you’re not allowed to dig up any wild plant without permission). The carrot-like roots have a dark brown skin and are beige-white in colour internally. The flower buds may be used, the young leaves, supple stem material, and the dried seeds, which are black in colour and used as an aromatic flavouring.

Indeed, the whole plant has a myrrh-like aromatic quality which is not to everyone’s liking, and this tends to be more exaggerated in older plants.

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BILBERRY - *Vaccinium myrtillus*

Bilberry is a small shrub which grows about 1 to 2ft tall, and is frequently found on heaths and hilly ground with poor soils, although I have come across it on the tops of several of the high-banked hedges around Cornwall.

As you can see from the top picture the nodding flowers of the plant are a sort of reddish-purple and eventually produce the tasty blue-black berries which have a bluey bloom. Use the berries to make pies, tarts, fruit sauce &c.
BURDOCK - *Arctium lappa & minor*

You have probably heard of dandelion and burdock root beer, well these burdocks are the plants involved in that famous drink.

Found in field margins and hedgerow verges the **greater burdock** (*A. lappa*) has large, almost kidney shaped leaves while those of the **lesser burdock** (*A. minor*) are more triangular in shape with the leaf edges tending to be wavy in both the horizontal and vertical axes. These burdocks also have a tendency to hybridise which can make exact positive ID sometimes difficult.

The roots are by far the best material to use, having a crunchy bamboo shoot-like texture when cooked. Cut roots into matchsticks or shred finely, then either stir-fry or simmer for 20-30 minutes, or until tender. Use either end of first year roots (these are biennial plants) or at start of year two. Young leaf stalk material may be used also, but remove the stringy cordage first. They can also be bitter, as can the root. If you read some survival handbooks you'll find the leaves being mentioned as edible. They may not be poisonous but they are pretty revolting to the taste-buds so don't bother with them unless you really are looking for 'survival' food.

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BROOKLIME - *Veronica beccabunga*

Brooklime is a succulent freshwater plant with glossy leaves. Sometimes it is found in running water / streams in which case the stems float, on other occasions it be found growing in soft damp ground near ponds and streams. Frequently it is found growing alongside watercress in Cornwall.

In the past the plant was regarded as one of the springtime food tonics (after a winter on pickles and salted meats). However, for modern palates the young leaves are generally a little too bitter for salads but can be added to pottages and soups as an additional veggie ingredient.

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CHICKWEED - *Stellaria media*

Chickweed is one of the star salad veggies found out and about. It's generally found everywhere where there is disturbed ground or soil, and will produce three or four generations in a year. Look out for it on footpaths, in gardens, parks and, of course, allotments.

Use the tender new growth up to about 3 or 4 inches tall as chickweed gets horribly chewy when older. The very young foliage (including the stems) can simply be harvested and used raw but you can also put it in soups or cook it. It has a very delicate taste.

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Cuckooflower is one of the late spring, early summer flowering plants with pale lilac-white flowers about 1 cm in diameter. It likes moist ground such as water-meadows, river banks, and marshy areas. Although I have heard reports of the species carpeting areas, in my own experience it doesn’t always do so and you may only find a few specimens growing at a time (so harvest wisely).

It is the leaves that you are after, particularly the early base leaves rather than the flowering stem leaves, and they have a hot peppery cress-like flavour with a warm aftertone. As such they can be used in salads to add something extra. The flowers and flower buds can also be similarly used, but even though it’s a perennial if there’s only a small colony don’t pick the flowers and leave the seeds to propagate the colony.
DANDELION - *Taraxacum officinale*

Dandelion has to be one of the best known plants, though it should be said there about 200 micro-species in the British Isles... all of which can be eaten. Two leaf shapes are pictured to the right.

The plant is a perennial, so unless you are digging up the roots for dandelion coffee (an extremely good substitute for the real thing) you can repeatedly harvest this plant which is full of vitamins.

The young leaves are best, however they are bitter and may not be to your liking. If you like raddichio and chicory then you should get on okay with the leaves. One way of reducing the bitterness is to light-blanch the growing leaves - use a black bin liner, upturned flowerpot or some similar item. The resulting leaves are a pale yellow-white colour and make a nice salad crop.

Also useful are the unopened flower buds which may be pickled, and the flowers which some folks use to make wine or may also be made into an interesting dandelion flower marmalade.

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**FAT-HEN** - *Chenopodium album*

With all the arable land in Cornwall it is not unsurprising that fat-hen makes an appearance. This annual plant likes open, disturbed habitats rather than grassy verges and meadows.

The leaves have a sort of toothed diamond shape, with a kind of mealy surface which sometimes feels quite granular to the touch. The specimen pictured is in its early growth phase and virtually all of the upper growth could be added to your pottage or soup, or cooked as a vegetable.

Fat-hen can grow to about 2ft tall (I’ve had one grow to about 3ft high) and then the upper stem leaves are more elongated and smooth-edged. The stems of older plants can be distinctly reddish in colour.

Overall, fat-hen in one of the best spinach-like substitute wild greens, and doesn’t have the grating ‘edge’ that you sometimes get with spinach.

Occasionally you’ll come may across **Fig-Leaved Goosefoot** (*C. ficofolium*) growing in fields and on waste ground, the leaves of which may also be cooked.
FENNEL - *Foeniculum vulgare*

Fennel is related to alexanders in terms of being part of the *Umbellifer* family. There are several types of fennel: the one providing the bulb used in culinary contexts is not this plant, there is also a garden bronze fennel. What we are looking at here is the ‘standard’ fennel which not only grows in gardens but also close to the sea. I have come across it growing in the shingle round Looe for example.

Fennel has an overall anise-like flavour whether you are using the seeds or the young frothy leaves. It is a perennial growing up to about 5ft. and the picture shows new growth emerging from last year’s stumps.

If you happen to be beach line fishing for mackerel and decide on an impromptu barby then look around to see if there’s any fennel nearby to add flavour - but then you might prefer your fish simply on its own.

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GOOSEGRASS / CLEAVERS - *Galium aparine*

If you have ever been on a country walk and found your socks or trousers dotted with little round bristly seeds then this is the likely culprit.

Goosegrass is an annual climber, the 'sticky' stems growing to about 4ft. in length and straggling over other vegetation (sometimes almost to the point of smothering the supporting plant). That 'stickyness' is due to the fine recurved hooks which cover the foliage surface, rather than any glue-like substance.

The parts to use of this are the VERY young spring seedlings which make a tender cooked vegetable. Any more than about 3 or 4 inches tall and the square stem starts to grow fibrous and is revolting. When the plant is slightly older the little tufts of upward pointing top leaves can also be nipped out and cooked up.

Finally, the seeds are used as a coffee-type substitute. Don't wait till they are dead and brown, but use them when they become purple in colour. It isn't exactly a wonderful 'coffee' but if you have nothing else then you might consider it.
OPPOSITE-LEAVED GOLDEN SAXIFRAGE -
*Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*

This small, low-lying plant with tiny, almost inconspicuous yellow flowers, is an inhabitant of moist shady places, and appears to be quite commonly found in Cornwall - as far as I can judge. Although it is frequently found alongside streams it only seems to need to have fresh moving water to thrive. Frequently it carpets moist areas.

The slightly blunt-toothed roundish leaves are supported on square stems, and with age the leaves become rather bristly on their top surface, and not particularly nice.

As a young plant the young springtime leaves and small stems can be cooked – in soups, pottages, and even as a veggie.
GROUND IVY - *Glechoma hederacea*

Ground Ivy is part of the mint family and has nothing to do with the true ivy plant, other than the fact that ground ivy trails on the ground like its namesake.

It is the leaves which are used, though they are rather bitter. That, however, makes them a good candidate for flavouring stuffing, soups and stews, and also as a tea once the leaves have been dried. An infusion of the fresh leaves can also provide you with a beverage.

www.wildfoodschoo.co.uk
HEDGE GARLIC - *Alliaria petiolata*

Called Jack-by-the-Hedge in the old days the leaves of this plant provide you with a very mild garlic-like flavour.

It is a biennial and during the first year simply forms a ground-hugging rosette with almost kidney-shaped leaves. In the second year it produces a flower stem and a cluster of small white, cross-shaped, flowers. The leaves of the stem are more like a rounded off nettle in profile rather than the kidney-shaped base leaves.

Young leaves can be used in salads while older ones are better cooked. However, old leaves eventually get bitter and chewy and aren't worth bothering with.

Excessive heat de-natures the garlic-like quality so add hedge garlic at the end of any cooking process.
HOGWEED - *Heracleum sphondylium*

Use of this very common weed comes with a CAUTION... the sap can blister skin, particularly in sunlight, and if you are going to use it the suggestion is to pick it on overcast days or from shaded habitats. Cut rather than break or tear the stalks.

With that caution out of the way, welcome to hogweed. It has been used on Continental Europe as a foodstuff in the past but in this country never had a following. It is the young, emerging leaf fronds which are used (pictured bottom) or freshly opened young leaves (top right). They are cooked, either boiled or steamed.

Hogweed is part of the *Umbellifer* family (carrot and parsley also belong too) and it is important that this plant is identified correctly as the family also includes some of the most toxic plant in the British Isles - hemlock and hemlock water-dropwort being the two key bad ones in the family. The seeds of hogweed (top left) are quite distinctive having 3 or 4 stripes (actually they are oil ducts) on the surface.

AVOID, also, the giant hogweed, the sap of which can cause skin blistering in the absence of any sunlight.

www.wildfoodschoool.co.uk
NAVELWORT - *Umbilicus rupestris*

There can be hardly anyone who lives in Cornwall who has not come across navelwort at some time or other, although they might not have realised that the leaves are edible.

It is a perennial plant which grows out of old walls and on rocks where there is moisture. One old book I have in my possession regarded this plant as ‘rare’ - not in Cornwall. Navelwort has a strange spike of pale yellow-green, tube-like, flowers which rather give it a sinister look.

There is also a version which grows in marshes but I would suggest you avoid that species as there is nothing in the literature to suggest it is edible, and quite the contrary in terms of livestock.

On the true navelwort the young leaves are best, either stir-fried, popped into pottages and soups, or added to other salad ingredients for its succulent crunchy texture. Older leaves get a bit bitter. The plant is also diuretic so perhaps best not use in too large quantities.
COMMON / STINGING NETTLE - *Urtica dioica*

It is doubtful that you need any introduction to the common, or stinging, nettle. Look out for this plant where there is good, rich soil, frequently where there is lots of humus from leaf fall.

Nettles only briefly need to be exposed to heat to denature the 'sting' which is actually formic acid. In the spring the whole young shoots up to about 3 or 4 inches tall make an excellent cooked veggie. For later growth the best leaves to harvest are the top two or four fresh green leaves, sometimes six. The lower ones aren't really worth bothering with if you are looking for 'quality'.

Be adventurous with nettles, don't confine yourself to that TV celeb chef fallback of nettle soup. Use nettles like a substitute for spinach - so nettle aloo, nettle roulade, pasta primavera &c.

The leaves may also be dried for later use, and also used as a beverage.

A plant long associated with nettles is the broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*). And the VERY young leaves of this may be eaten once cooked. They're more survival food than pleasant eating.

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ORACHE - *Atriplex*

There are numerous members of the orache family (closely allied to the *Chenopodiaceae* which includes *Fat-Hen* - covered elsewhere in this guide), and they quite easily confused since leaf shapes can look remarkably similar.

The two you are most likely to come across near the sea coasts are *Atriplex patula* and *hastata* (pictured). The leaves of both of these can be cooked up as a vegetable green or added to soups, pottage &c.

If you’re on one of the heritage or conservancy beaches please don’t pick the orache – or any other forage green for that matter.
RAMSONS - *Allium ursinum*

If you have ever done any foraging before then you might well be familiar with ramsons. It is the edible green that most folks refer to as wild garlic (actually there are a number of wild garlicks so that common name can rather confuse the issue).

Perennial ramsons is one of the quintessential late spring flowers and reeks of garlic. The whole plant may be used (REMEMBER you are not allowed to uproot any wild plant without authorisation - besides you'd be destroying your source of garlic leaf greens by removing any bulb). Use the young leaves chopped in salads or cook them gently, chop and add to soups. The flowerbuds may also be used, the flowers too, while the young seedpods may be 'blitzed' to make a quite good garlic pesto. Excessive heat drives off the volatile oils in ramsons so it's generally best to add ramsons at the end of any cooking method.

CAUTION: the leaves of the poisonous *lily-of-the-valley* (*Convallaria majalis*) look very similar to that of ramsons so be careful. However, if you crush ramsons leaves you will smell garlic whereas that does not apply to *convallaria*.
SMOOTH SOW-THISTLE – *Sonchus oleraceus*
Now scurvy-grass might have a name that conjures up an image of disease but in fact it was used as part of the medicinal cure for scurvy in the old days because of its high vitamin content.

It’s a plant that likes saline conditions so will be found growing in clumps on Cornwall’s cliffs and shorelines, but also in the saline esturine creeks of our tidal rivers (as can sea beet, mentioned elsewhere).

Scurvy-grass has a peppery, almost horseradish-like pungency which you may or may not like. The leaves are only good before the plant comes into flower because, as the plant ages, it develops a kind of acetone overtone which is unpleasant to nostrils and taste-buds alike. When young, however, it can add an interesting flavour accent to salads and dips.
SEA BEET - *Beta vulgaris* ssp. *maritima*

This upright growing perennial is very common to Cornwall’s shorelines and coasts, and the young leaves make a very good vegetable green when cooked.

The leaves are quite fleshy, and become leathery and darker green when old. Sea beet stems frequently trail or lie on the ground while the plant produces a spike of inconspicuous flowers.
SEA BUCKTHORN - *Hippophae rhamnoides*

Sea buckthorn is a silvery-tinged, green leaved shrub which grows to about 8ft tall, and is frequently found in dune-like and sandy heath habitats near the coast and sea. Frequently it will grow in almost thicket-like clumps.

The plant is armed with thorns but it produces clusters of small orange fruits (about the size of a small pea from all the examples that I have encountered) which have a really tart-acid taste. They are not to everyone’s liking but are full of vitamin C and make a lovely vigorously refreshing taste.

In the picture you’ll see a few really bright berries. These are the fully ripened ones and are what you should be aiming to use rather than the lighter coloured ones.
SORREL, COMMON - *Rumex acetosa*

Sorrel is an amazing edible - if you like the sort of acid taste of lemon, rhubarb or gooseberries. It's a very common perennial with leaves which can best be described as arrow-like at the base, having ears that extend backwards towards the leaf stem.

Common sorrel is a plant of meadows, pasture and hedgerows, and the high-banked Cornish hedges make picking the leaves of this excellent plant very easy.

The whole plant (as in leaf and stem) has a lovely fresh acid taste and may be used raw in salads or it can be cooked like spinach. When cooked, however, the leaves turn a dark green that doesn't look particularly appealing but the taste improves and it makes a great pudding ingredient for crumbles and turnovers. DO NOT, however, eat sorrel in large quantities or too often.

A note of CAUTION. There is one poisonous plant which has leaves very similar in shape to sorrel when in its young state. That plant is the Cuckoopint or Lords & Ladies (*Arum maculatum*). You may well recognise the *Arum* in autumn, as the plant at that stage in its life has a cluster of scarlet berries on a stalk.

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SMOOTH SOW-THISTLE - *Sonchus oleraceus*

This plant is almost as common as the dandelion and although it's a plant of waste places and cultivated ground it will frequently be found growing in the narrow gaps between walls and pavements where it can find a foothold. It's also a frequent garden weed, but appears to be less frequent towards the coast from experience.

Smooth Sow-thistle is an annual, the flower stem is hollow and exudes a bitter white sap when cut or broken. Although at first glance the pale yellow flowers look a bit dandelion-like you will see from the top picture that the flower stalk has a cluster of flower buds whereas true dandelions have single flowers on their stalks. Smooth Sow-thistle is also highly variable physically, and is frequently tinged with purple where it is stressed through nutrient or water deficiency.

The part to eat are the very young leaves which do make quite good eating at that stage - once cooked. Although some folks can tolerate the leaves in salads they are generally too bitter. Don't bother with older leaves which are prickly (any prickles should be removed if have to resort to older leaves).

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THREE-CORNERED LEEK - *Allium triquetrum*

This perennial plant is the nearest wild equivalent to garlic chives that you can get and makes a very good ingredient - young leaves in salads and older leaves cooked. The flowers and flower buds may also be used.

Three-cornered leek is not a native of this country and is generally found towards warmer southern coasts and in certain parts of Cornwall it’s endemic and almost a troublesome weed.

The whole plant reeks of garlic when crushed, and although the leaves grow about 12 inches in length they look almost like grass. However, the have a distinctive angular keel on one side of the leaf (top right picture). The cluster of white bell-like flowers sit on a single stalk, and also smell of garlic.
OTHER SPECIES WITH SOMETHING TO OFFER

The majority of the vascular plants covered in the previous pages are what might mainly be regarded as edible weeds. Here are a few more plants which might provide you with some extra flavours PLUS a number of ornamentals that folks might be growing in your corner of Cornwall.

BIRCH, SILVER - *Betula pendula*
Sap extracted from the trunk in early spring can provide a useful cooking fluid, and can be fermented and made into a wine. The sap is diuretic.

ELDER, COMMON - *Sambucus nigra*
This probably needs no introduction. The flowers can be used to make a so-called ‘champagne’ and also the ripe berries for wine. The unopened flower buds can be pickled and used like capers. Do not consume elder leaves or bark - they are poisonous.

MOUNTAIN ASH / ROWAN - *Sorbus aucuparia*
This tree is very commonly planted in urban areas but you’ll find lots of trees dotted round the hedgerows of Cornwall. The ripe orange-red berries are used to make the rowan jelly conserve.

GORSE - *Ulex europaeus*
There seems to be lots of this prickly shrub
around Cornwall, particularly on upland areas and the waste ground left behind after the mining industries. It isn’t a great provider in terms of edible foliage but the flowers have a flavour and smell of coconut. They can be used to flavour vinegar, make wine, and also a gorse and honey ice cream.

HORSERADISH - *Cochlearia armoracia*  
You may well find this perennial in waste ground, as well as hedgerows although you will need permission to dig up any root material for making your own horseradish sauce the young, fresh green, springtime leaves may be cooked and eaten. Older leaves are horribly bitter.

MARIGOLD - *Calendula officinalis*  
The orangy-yellow flower petals of this were used as a flavouring and colouring in the past. I vaguely remember seeing a reference somewhere as to the leaves being used in salads or cooked in old times, but don’t quote me on that.

NASTURTIUM - *Tropaeolum majus*  
A favourite garden plant, the flowers and leaves of which are edible. Peppery young leaves make a good salad item or general nibble.
A FEW BEVERAGE IDEAS...

Dried green blackberry leaves can be used as a tea. Raspberry leaves can similarly be used (don’t use either during pregnancy).

Young leaves of the wild / dog rose (Rosa canina) may also be used for an infused beverage.

The open clumps of flowers of the Meadowsweet (Filipendula ulmaria) - which particularly likes moist habitats – make an interesting beverage when infused for a few minutes in hot water. Sweeten with a little honey.

Elder flowers, partly covered previously, may be dried for later use as an infused beverage.

Dried flowers of the Lime tree (Tilia) made a tea known as Linden Tea in former times. It’s got some herbal qualities so it’s probably best to drink this in moderation.

Although it's not something I have tried the leaves of mountain ash (Sorbus aucuparia) have been used to adulterate tea in the past so there might be some scope there for experimentation.

If you have permission to dig up dandelion roots then these make an excellent coffee substitute once roasted.
SAFE WILD PLANT FORAGING

THE GOLDEN RULE...
If you cannot identify a wild plant with 100% certainty as being one of the edible species NEVER use it as food. If you have the slightest hesitation over a plant's identity be safe and MOVE ON. Similarly, if you cannot remember which part of the plant is used leave it alone.

MOST IMPORTANT...
Check your personal tolerance to ANY new edible wild plant before consuming in quantity. If you have a medical condition or are taking medication then you should seek professional medical advice before consuming edible wild plants as they may contain constituents that impair or amplify that medication.

AND DO...
Be 'aware' of the environment that you are gathering from. Is there possible contamination from effluent, car exhaust emissions, sprays, dogs and so on?

LASTLY...
NEVER consume dead or dying foliage, or that which is discoloured (although the plant COULD be just discoloured from bad soil nutrients it could also be an indicator of weedkillers at work).
WILD FOOD SCHOOL

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