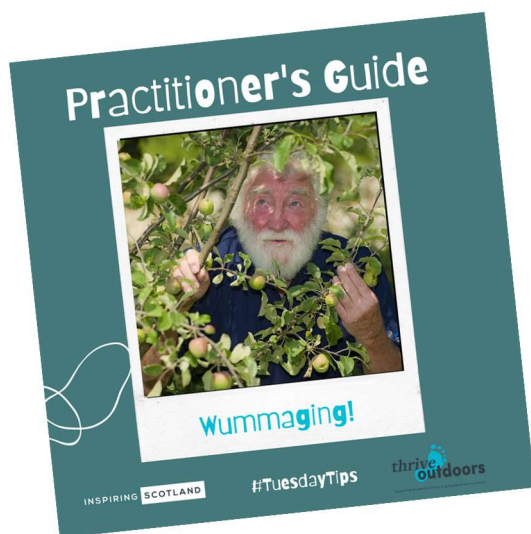


A Practitioner's Guide to OUTDOOR PLAY BASED LEARNING 'FORAGING'

This week we turn our focus to foraging.



Do you love nothing better than going all David Bellamy (ask your parents!) and “wummaging awound” in the “undergwoff” for tasty treats?

Are you worried you don't know your edible mushrooms from your less 'savoury' kind?

Are you just not sure what it is or where to start?

We asked a couple of foraging experts and keen beans for their top tips for tasty treats outdoors...So big thanks to Hamish from [Baltic Street Adventure Playground](#) for developing this week's tips and to Zoe at [Earthtime](#) for foraging know-how!

Autumn is one the best times for foraging – the brambles are rich with berries, many varieties of apples and pears are at their ripest, hot crumbles and pies are almost staple desserts on the table.

So, this is the perfect time to learn a bit more about the art of **foraging!**

If you have, at one time in your life or another, picked a berry or leaf from a plant growing in the wild and eaten it, that's foraging.

You are a forager!

Welcome to the club! Foraging is defined as the gathering of food in the wild to eat or to use for medicine.

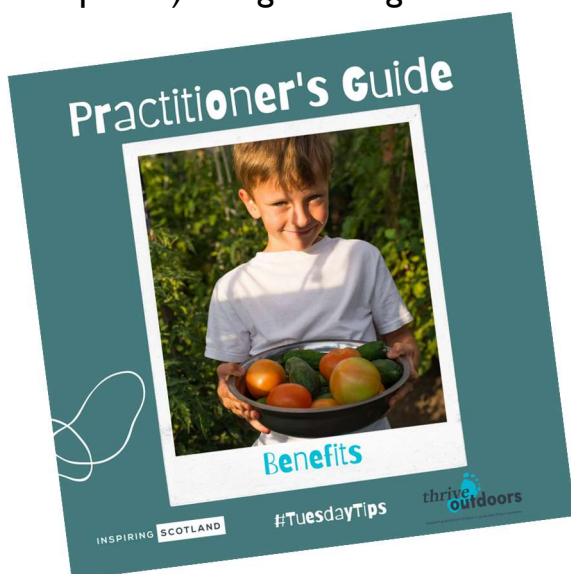
Countryfile say:

“**Foraging** is the activity of finding, gathering and harvesting wild foods – for free.
It's a great way to stay active and spend time outdoors connecting with nature and learn more about where your food comes from.”

We're going to focus on a few of our foraging favourites and we'd love to hear some of yours too!

So what are the benefits of foraging?

There's loads of benefits to foraging with children, the most important (in our opinion) being learning about the natural environment.



When we go foraging with children it helps open up conversations about local ecosystems, plants and where our food comes from.

We can also take this further and go into cooking as well.

If you're familiar with the play types, foraging fits into recapitulative play – See <https://www.playscotland.org/resources/play-types-poster/>.

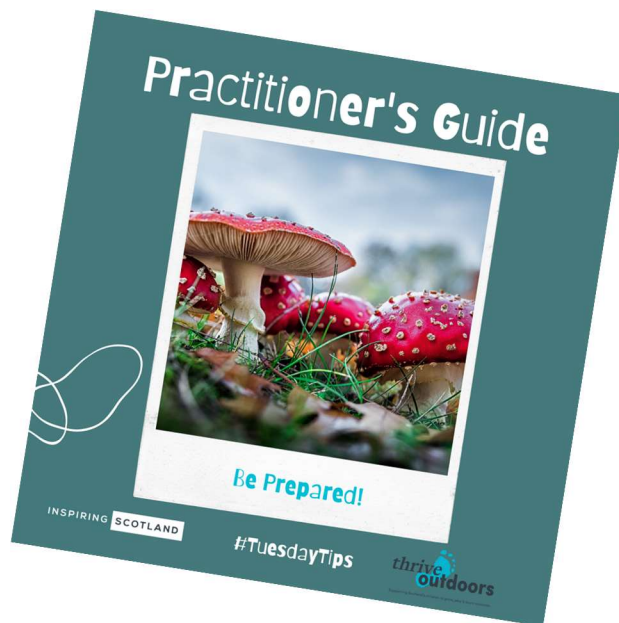
“Play that allows the child to explore ancestry, history, rituals, stories, rhymes, fire and darkness. Enables children to access play of earlier human evolutionary stages.” Bob Hughes

Foraging also fits neatly with **David Sobel's Design Principles for children and nature** which we explored a few week's ago (<https://bit.ly/2Svk7rr>)

“From a genetic perspective, we are still hunting and gathering organisms. Gathering and collecting anything compels us; searching for hidden treasure or the Holy Grail is as recurrent mythic form. Look at the success of ‘Where’s Waldo’. How do we design learning opportunities like treasure hunts” David Sobel – Hunting & Gathering.

Our cultural heritage is intertwined with local foods and a little digging can unearth lots of interesting and useful stories that can be woven together with activities to create multi stranded learning experiences.

Be prepared and super-duper sure!!



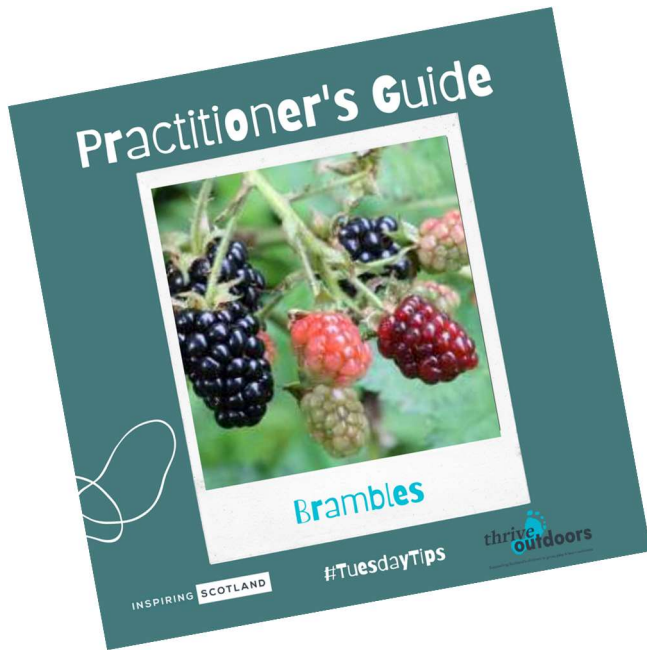
Precautions

- Make sure you're 100% sure you know what it is. Some plants are toxic to humans so make sure you know exactly what you're eating.
- Don't forage next to roads as plants absorb pollutants.
- Make sure anything you forage comes from above dog wee height (usually knee height) and don't pick anything from the ground where animals can access.
- Leave some for others – never take everything!

Some useful links for foraging safety:

<https://www.foragelondon.co.uk/sensible-foraging/>
<https://www.eatweeds.co.uk/foraging-safety-guidelines>
<https://bit.ly/3nmd4zu>

Starting out easy.....



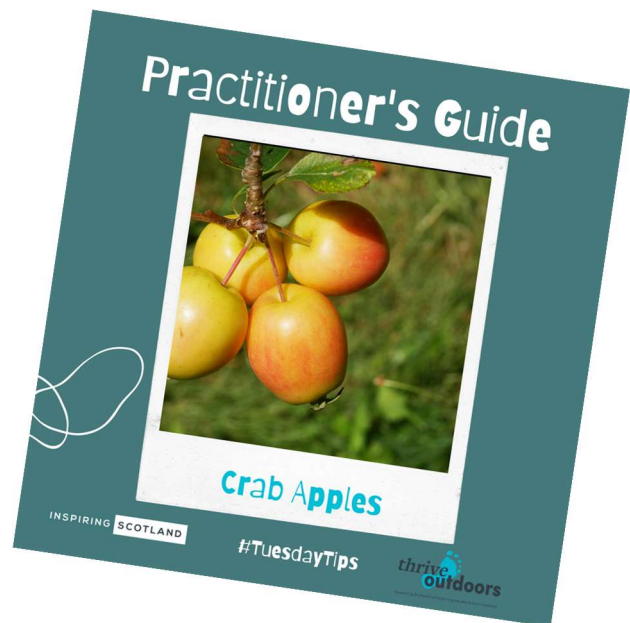
The best place to start is with **common fruits** that are easy to identify, for example:

Blackberries, or **brambles**, are easy to identify and can be found almost everywhere! Just make sure to give them a wash before eating and to be super safe you can freeze them.

They are a versatile berry that can be made into pies, tasty crumbles, and jams.

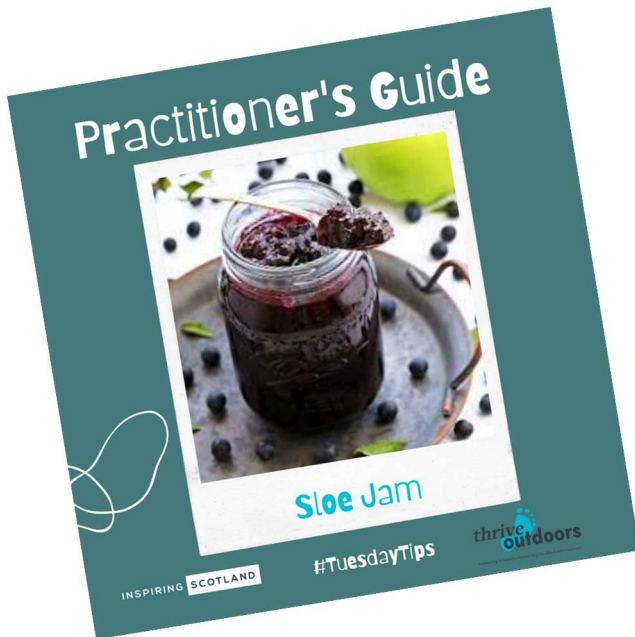
Crab apples are an often overlooked and maligned fruit. Their name maybe doesn't help, and indeed the origin of the name is as interesting to explore as the possibilities for the fruit – nobody really seems to know! There are theories that it comes from the Swedish 'Skrabba' meaning unripe fruit, which could fit as they can be quite sharp and sour.

But they can also be sweet – you just don't know until you taste them! They are more easily identified by their small, often misshapen and scruffy looking appearance. But as is often the way with nature, we shouldn't judge on appearances alone! Crab apple jelly is one of Earthtime's favourite autumn foraging creations. The woodland trust has some great recipes here - <https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2018/10/crab-apple-recipes/>



Wild Plum trees can be hidden gems and can be found anywhere, use them as you would an ordinary plums, they are also very easy to cultivate so why not get a tree for your setting and grow them yourself!

<https://www.pomonafruits.co.uk/fruit-nut-trees/cordon-columnar-fruit-trees/mini-orchard-collections/cordon-apple-plum-cherry-collection-3-trees>



Sloes sadly aren't that much use in the kitchen ... however make great flavouring for gin!

Robin Hartford also has a great jam recipe for them.

Sloe Hedgerow Jam

8 oz rosehips, 500g sloes, 1 kg crab apples, 300g blackberries & raspberries, 300g sugar

Wash and clean the fruit. Put the rosehips, sloes and chopped crab apples into a preserving pan. Add water to cover and

simmer slowly, until all the fruits are tender. Pass the fruit mixture through a jam strainer. Keep the liquid, weigh it and pour into a large sauce pan. Add the same amount of sugar as there is liquid, then add the blackberries, raspberries and simmer for 15 minutes, or until the mixture reaches setting point. Pour into sterilised jars and put lids on immediately. Makes approximately 10 small jars.

YUM!

Hawthorns are some of the most common trees in Scotland and can be found in woodland, gardens and parks everywhere, the raw fruits (haws) are quite sour and don't make great eating however there's some great recipes out there for Hawthorn Jelly, as well as fruit leather - Here's a prehistoric version from **Ray Mears** - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSrAZH4eblk>) and some haw- sin sauce

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2012/oct/12/wild-hedgerow-berries-recipes>

Elder flowers make a beautiful cordial, which can be a lovely and naturally refreshing drink in summer but also a delicious warming drink by the fire in colder weather. Children love the process of harvesting the flowers and cooking up their cordial over a fire to make a most magical tonic!

Nettles, rosehips and **dandelions** also make great teas!

Teaching children to respect but not be fearful of nettles is a fantastic learning opportunity and very empowering to learn they can pick them without getting stung.... with practice!

The best time for nettles is in late May , just before they start to flower, here is a lovely nettle soup recipe <https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/nettle-soup>

Enjoy this? Share your discussions, pictures and progress with us on social media – details below (and show us your tasty foraged treats!)

If you have top tips you would love to share, please contact us on: Facebook @ThriveOutdoorsScot, Twitter @Thrive_Outdoors or by email Jo@inspiringscotland.org.uk

Useful Links and reading

Robin Hartford: Eat Weeds - <https://www.eatweeds.co.uk/foraging-in-autumn?source=books> and associated Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/EatWeeds>

Another great resource is the timeless Collins gem book 'Food For Free' which is both cheap and handy: <https://www.waterstones.com/book/food-for-free/richard-mabey/9780007183036> - here's a review: <http://www.walkfife.com/collins-gem-food-free-book-review/>

For some free info check out the Foraging in Scotland FB group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/137146776427799>

Dan Puplett is a naturalist, conservationist and environmental educator providing training in a range of nature-based skills, as well as opportunities to get closer to the fantastic fauna and flora of our planet. <https://www.danpuplett.net/>

A blog on wild food, wild medicine, wild living and the old ways of doing and being: <https://monicawilde.com/wild-food-foraging-walks-workshops-scotland/>

Foraging with Kids – Adele Nozedar: <http://kids.breconbeaconsforaging.com/>