Edible Wild Plants
A foraging guide to 15 common plants growing in the Maltese islands
Introduction

This booklet is part of an effort by Friends of the Earth Malta (FoEM) to raise awareness and foster a greater appreciation of the wild edible flora present in the Maltese archipelago. The importance of wild plants is regrettably often overlooked, with a diverse array of plant life frequently dismissed as just weeds, or ħaxix ħażin.

We hope that this publication reaches as many people as possible and helps change perceptions of wild plants for what they truly are: beautiful in and of themselves, providing a sign of life and a splash of colour in grey urban sprawl which, if present trends continue, will soon cover the entire country. They play a fundamental role in wildlife habitats and ecosystems, as all wild animals, from bees and butterflies to locally breeding birds, depend directly or indirectly on wild plants. They have also become a traditional feature of our natural landscape and a part of what makes Malta recognisable as such. Furthermore, some of them hold direct economic value as potential sources of food or for their medicinal properties.

In line with our commitment to food sovereignty and ensuring that the food that we eat is healthy and ecologically sound we have prepared this foraging guide to help you on your adventures in finding nutritious new ingredients close to home.
The following are some of the benefits derived from them:

- Wild plants are highly nutritious, a good source of several vitamins, minerals, fibre, antioxidants, and phytochemicals which protect one's body from ageing and pollutants.

- Consumption of wild plants is economically sound. Being self-propagating, growing unaided, and fully adapted to our local climate and soils, they do not require expensive irrigation systems, substantial amounts of water, chemical treatments, construction of greenhouses, and long hours of manual labour in order to flourish. The best thing of course is that, unlike the produce sold in supermarkets, they are free.

- Unlike some conventionally grown produce (and unless one picks them from fields where such chemicals are used or from the sides of polluted roads), wild plants are not treated with or exposed to large amounts of chemical pesticides and fertilizers.

- Taking a walk to forage in nature is a therapeutic activity, helping one to de-stress and nurture a spiritual bond with the land and the wildlife that it supports.

- Identifying areas of the countryside with high concentrations of wild edible plants creates an incentive for the legal protection of such areas from development.

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**Foraging Guide**

1. **Always be sure of the identity of the wild plant**

   If you have got even the slightest doubt regarding the identity of the plant, do not pick it. Remember, there are a few poisonous species of wild plants and other species with poisonous parts. Misidentifying plants may cause you to inadvertently pick something that is potentially harmful. The illustrations in this booklet are artistic impressions of the plants and are not accurate representations. Refer to the photos at the end of the book, carry out adequate research, and always consult with experts on the subject before consuming a plant that you are not 100% sure you have identified correctly.

2. **Handle and consume with caution**

   If you experience some allergic reaction or other undesirable side-effect while handling/consuming or after having handled/consumed the plant, stop handling/consuming it immediately and seek advice and assistance from a medical professional. While all wild plants listed in this booklet are known to be safe to eat and have been consumed by humans for millennia, it always pays to err on the side of caution. If you are consuming a certain species for the first time, do not consume large doses of it, especially if you are eating it raw. Just wait and see how your body reacts before consuming it another time.
3. Wash foraged plants thoroughly

Even though one should always pick plants from the least polluted spots, there is still no guarantee that the edible parts are clean. Some wild foods, like the brambleberry, will be very enticing, and it will be hard to resist eating them on the spot, but we cannot stress enough how important it is to wash well anything you plan to consume. This will prevent from inadvertently ingesting dirt and potentially even less pleasant things like excrement from other creatures.

4. Respect wildlife while foraging

Pick judiciously. While all wild plant species listed in this guide are common and not of concern conservation-wise, please keep in mind that even the most common of species can be negatively impacted by over-picking; once you have located a population of a certain edible species, make sure you leave plenty of it and that those you leave behind greatly outnumber those you have picked. Moreover, there is usually no need to kill any plants while foraging—one may sparingly take some leaves, tender shoots, stalks, seeds, etc. from each individual plant without doing any long-term damage.

Never pick rare, threatened, and endangered species.

Do not disturb, harm, or kill wild fauna. If you notice the presence of birds’ nests, insect colonies, caterpillars or pupae, etc. among the plant branches or within the immediate vicinity of the plant, keep walking and leave the plant untouched.

Do not uproot or dig up underground plant parts. This would disrupt or cut short the life cycle of all flora and fauna within the immediate vicinity of the plant. It is for this reason that wild plants with edible bulbs/tubers/rhizomes/roots were deliberately omitted from this work.

5. Enjoy foraging in your garden

One of the easiest and most enjoyable ways of finding wild plants to eat is to stop weeding your garden, or at least parts of your garden. Most of the edible plants listed here could soon emerge spontaneously on your own property if you stop keeping your garden spotlessly neat and tidy. You would then have plenty of wild greens at hand and, best of all, your garden will become a haven for wildlife. Bees, butterflies, intriguing insects and invertebrates will start visiting the garden, even establishing themselves in it, and you will have a mini-nature reserve on your doorstep.
Wild Edible Plants in Malta

The following 15 species are some of the most readily available throughout the Maltese islands but this is by no means an exhaustive list of all the wild plants that are edible or have edible parts.

1 Caper
2 Nettle
3 Sea Beet
4 Mediterranean Asparagus
5 Fennel
6 Borage
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10 White Wall-rocket
11 Alexanders
12 Golden Samphire
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Caper
Kappar
Capparis orientalis
Caper

Hardly any introduction is needed for such a familiar plant, but it is interesting to note that two species of caper occur locally: *Capparis orientalis*, which is common, and *Capparis spinosa*, which is much less common, and easily distinguished from the former by the prickles at the base of the leaf stems. The rarity of *Capparis spinosa* makes it a species of conservation concern—if you spot this species, refrain from picking or cutting any parts of it. In fact, we would appreciate it if you reported encounters with it to us, as knowing the full extent of its distribution would better facilitate its conservation.

In Malta cape- buds are commonly preserved and used as a condiment, they are either left to dry a little or preserved in coarse sea salt, before being left to cure in brine or vinegar. The buds form towards late spring and early summer and its white flowers are commonly in bloom from April to September. It may come as a surprise that caper buds may also be made into a pesto—this is a tradition on the Italian island of Salina.

Not only the caper bud is edible, but also the berry—the green and elongated fruit, not larger than a grape—that can also be pickled and consumed similarly to the bud.

Preferred Habitats

Walls (including rubble walls, and fortifications), rocks, frequently as a component of garrigue vegetation (including coastal rocks, limestone pavements, valley sides, rocky outcrops of cultivated field terraces), in the shade of carob, fig, almond trees or prickly pear thickets, where it forms part of the understorey of maquis or pseudo maquis vegetation.

Nettle

Hurrieq

*Urtica spp.*
Nettle

It can be easily recognised as the plant with fine hairs that releases a chemical which causes an irritating stinging sensation when it comes in contact with skin. From this genus there are three locally occurring species: *Urtica membranacea*, *Urtica urens* and *Urtica pilulifera*. *Urtica pilulifera* is distinguished by the spherical inflorescences and a larger size. We would suggest you avoid picking it for the following three reasons: unlike the other two species, it is not common, though not too rare either; its stings are more painful than those of the other two; and it is partial to heavily polluted places, road verges being its chief habitat.

Nettles feature prominently in Maltese folk medicine as a remedy for chilblain (*seqi*) whereby the affected fingers, and toes are treated with a nettle decoction. Nettles have also been used in traditional medicine in other parts of the world to help soothe muscle and joint pains. It has also been used as a source of nutrition across Europe in times of famine.

When picking nettles, one may wear gloves to avoid the stinging sensation, and go for plants that have not flowered yet. Younger and more tender leaves are less bitter. The leaves should not be eaten raw. Boiling water instantly softens the stingers, and the leaves may then be used in soups or teas. Nettle is a good substitute for spinach or other leafy greens. You can try using them to make an excellent pesto or as a ravioli filling.

Preferred Habitats

Soils with high nitrogenous content, mainly in places regularly subject to anthropogenic disturbance, including gardens, orchards, vineyards, and cultivated fields.

Caution

Nettles are one of the chief food plants of the larvae of the Red Admiral Butterfly (*Vanessa atalanta* - *Farfett tal-Hurrieq*). Should you notice the bristly caterpillars on the leaves, please leave the plants untouched.
Sea beet

This very common, rather shabby-looking herb is one of the most useful wild edible plants. Local country-folk would occasionally consume it, even adding it to vegetable soup (*minestra*). However, traditionally, it has mainly been valued as green fodder for ruminants.

Sea beet is actually the wild ancestor of the spinach beet (*Beta vulgaris ssp. cicla* – locally also known as *Selq*) and the beetroot (*Beta vulgaris ssp. vulgaris* – *Pitravi*). Unlike the beetroot, however, it lacks the swollen red taproot. The edible part is the foliage which develops during the rainy season and makes a very suitable substitute for cultivated spinach (*Spinacia oleracea* – *Spinaci*) since the taste is quite similar. It may be eaten raw, boiled, or stir-fried in the same way one would eat spinach or chard.

The sea beet flowers from June to September. The leaves vary in size and shape, with the colour often ranging from dark green to reddish. It is best eaten when the leaves are young and tender, before the plant has produced flowers, since bitterness increases once the plant has flowered and starts forming seeds.

Preferred Habitats

Occurring virtually everywhere, mainly in coastal areas with deep red soil, gardens, orchards, vineyards, cultivated or fallow fields, roadsides, walls.
**Mediterranean Asparagus**

*Mediterranean Asparagus*

Asparagus aphyllus

**Språg**

Probably the most underrated of all wild edible plants in this guide, most local farmers and gardeners consider it to be a rampant weed that serves no purpose other than to produce thorns. Many people are surprised when they discover that it is a wild relative of the cultivated asparagus (*Asparagus officinalis*) which they purchase from a store.

Seeing the spiny plant growing alongside rubble walls and shrubs, one would not think that this plant can ever produce fleshy, delicious, and edible asparagus shoots since for most of the year the plant is bristly and uninviting. From December to March however, it produces a bountiful yield of wild edible shoots.

When out foraging, look out for the newly emergent green ‘spears’ that have not yet developed the prickly cladodes. Generally, there would be one thicker main ‘spear’ and then smaller asparagus shoots branching out. Break off the shoots from the point where it snaps off easily. Use it as you would use commercially grown asparagus, by sauteeing it, and using it in vegetable soups, salads, vegetable pies, etc.

**Preferred Habitats**

Occurring virtually everywhere, its climbing thorny branches are most commonly observed on the margins of cultivated or fallow fields in the shade of walls, as well as among shrubs and the lower branches of trees and prickly pear thickets, where it forms part of maquis and pseudomaquis vegetation.
Fennel

One of the very few wild edible plants to be widely used and appreciated within the Maltese islands, and one of the only two—the other being the caper, q.v.—that is still frequently foraged. The ‘seeds’ (technically they are not seeds but a type of dry fruit which botanists refer to as mericarps) are collected and used as a spice, added to roast potatoes, meat dishes, and dried figs (tin imqadded), their flavour being reminiscent of that of aniseed (Pimpinella anisum – Hiewwa). Fennel ‘seeds’ are gently collected by hand in late summer after they have dried up in the hot summer months.

The leaves, young stems, and shoots are also edible and may be used in much the same way as the commercially grown fennel bulb/florence

Fennel (Foeniculum vulgare var. azoricum). Stir-frying them with onions produces particularly rewarding results. The young leaves and stems can also be used to make a fresh fennel pesto that can be enjoyed with pasta dishes or spread on crackers.

The leaves are very aromatic and one can even notice the enjoyable aroma on a countryside walk.

Preferred Habitats

Occurring virtually everywhere, mainly in places formerly subject to much anthropogenic disturbance and subsequently abandoned, e.g. fallow fields, unploughed margins of cultivated fields, old stabilized heaps of debris, valley beds, roadsides, etc.
Borage

The borage plant is the most popular medicinal plant throughout the Maltese islands, with a decoction made from its flowering tops consumed as a cough remedy. It is widely known as an edible plant, and even cultivated on a small scale in some countries. In Malta it occurs exclusively as a wild plant and is common, even abundant, in rich soils that are frequently subject to disturbance.

Being densely set with prickly hairs, this herb cannot be eaten raw. It is prepared and eaten in the same way as nettles are, namely by covering its very broad leaves and young stems with boiling water to soften the stingers. The leaves are rich in potassium and calcium, and they should always be eaten when freshly cut because they will lose their flavour if dry. This leafy green has a very fresh cucumber smell when cut, but once boiled it can be used in pestos, ravioli fillings, soups, stir-fried, and enjoyed like many other leafy greens. The blue flowers can be eaten raw, and they can be served in salads, or to decorate dishes and drinks.

This is an annual herb and self-seeds year after year, so if you have a little garden you can collect some borage seeds from the wild and grow it there. Apart from being edible it also attracts pollinators like wild bees, which are always a welcome guest.

Preferred Habitats

Occurring virtually everywhere, but preferring places with deep soil containing high levels of nitrogen and subject to anthropogenic disturbance, e.g. fallow or cultivated fields, gardens, orchards, vineyards, heaps of debris, valley beds, roadsides, road centre strips, etc.
White Mignonette

The white mignonette was mostly valued by Maltese farmers as a feed for ruminants and selcomly incorporated in human diets. This is not the case in other Mediterranean countries, such as Italy, where it is regularly picked for the table.

It flowers from January to May. The flowers of the mignonette produce large quantities of nectar and as such is an important food source for honey bees.

The stem of the *Reseda alba* is erect and cylindrical while the leaves are alternate, wavy, and deeply incised. They can be up to 15cm long and they are arranged to form a rosette at the base of the stem. The small and numerous white flowers are gathered in a long linear raceme and give a wonderful scent.

The leaves may be eaten raw or cooked, in salads, soups, stir-fries, or liquidized into a green smoothie. The attractive white inflorescences are best avoided since they generally taste rather bitter.

Preferred Habitats

All places subject to anthropogenic disturbance, e.g. fallow or cultivated fields, gardens, orchards, vineyards, heaps of debris, valley beds, clay slopes, limestone pavements, roadsides, walls and rubble walls, etc.
Purslane

One of the very few wild greens to be available throughout the summer drought when most other herbage is parched. It is also one of the most nutritious, being a very rich vegetable source of Omega-3 fatty acids. It is often mistakenly regarded as a weed in home gardens.

Its current nomenclature derives from the Latin portula, or small door, with reference to the small flowers that open spontaneously to drop the seeds. The stems of Portulaca oleracea grow horizontally on the ground and appear fleshy and reddish. The light-green coloured leaves have a cylindrical shape. With the arrival of summer heat, small yellowish flowers generally begin to appear on the branches of this ground cover plant. The flowers are not only beautiful to look at but also excellent for use in the kitchen.

The entire aerial part may be eaten raw or cooked. It pairs particularly well with olives, capers, sun-dried tomatoes, and cheeselets (gbejnjiet). The leaves and branches can be used to give flavour to mixed salads, in which both tender leaves and branches are added. It has a bitterish taste but at the same time pleasant, so that it melds well with many other types of salads and vegetables.

Portulaca oleracea can easily be added to various kinds of soup. It is also excellent when fried in batters, added to omelettes, as a ravioli filling, as a pesto for fresh pasta, or in a ratatouille. Even the small seeds, once dried, can be eaten. They can be used in bread dough and other
baked goods or sprinkled over yoghurt, salads etc. in the same way one would use linseeds.

**Purslane Pesto**

**Preferred Habitats**

All places with deep soil that are irrigated during the summer and subject to anthropogenic disturbance, such as cultivated fields, orchards, flower pots, road centre strips, roadsides, perennially moist or wet valley beds, etc.

Try out this recipe created by Biome Munch.

*www.biome-munch.com*

**Ingredients**

- 1 cup purslane
- 1 cup basil
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1/2 cup nut/seeds of your choice. For a local option you can take the pumpkin seeds from pumpkins and cook them, otherwise walnuts work well too.
- 1/2 cup of salty hard cheese. For a local option you can use dried gbejna, alternatively use parmesan or nutritional yeast
- 1/2 a lemon, juiced
- 3 cloves of garlic

**Method**

Blend thoroughly, and add to any food you’d like.

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**Perennial Wall-rocket**

*Garëgira safra / Aruka salvaqga*

*Diplotaxis tenuifolia*
Perennial Wall-rocket

An abundant alien weed pertaining to the cruciferous family of vegetables, which includes cabbage, broccoli, kohlrabi, mustard, and rucola (Eruca sativa – Aruka), which it closely resembles.

The leaves taste similar to rucola and may be used in much the same way. Perennial Wall-rocket has the added advantage of being available throughout the year, even during the dry summer months. Given its particular spiciness, it is particularly loved by those who like strong flavours. The leaves are the most commonly used part, and these should preferably be harvested when they are tender. If you are going for walks in the countryside you can easily spot these plants growing in rural areas. They make a delicious addition to a salad since the wild rocket leaves have a much stronger taste than the cultivated ones.

It is worth mentioning here another edible wild cruciferous vegetable: the bargeman’s cabbage/wild turnip (Brassica rapa ssp. campestris – Liftija), which is the wild ancestor of the commercially grown turnip. It too has yellow flowers, but frequently grows much taller than the Perennial Wall-rocket and has broad, lobed cabbage-like leaves. It is common, but only available during the rainy season. Its leaves may be used instead of cabbage leaves.

Preferred Habitats

Places subject to anthropogenic disturbance, such as cultivated or fallow fields, gardens, orchards, vineyards, heaps of debris, roadsides, etc.

Pomegranate Couscous with Wall-rocket

Ingredients
1 small ripe pomegranate
200g couscous
1 spring onion, chopped into small pieces
Zest and juice of 1 small lemon
A handful of wild rucola
A couple of fresh spinach leaves or other leafy greens (such as chard or kale)
A handful of chopped coriander (you can substitute this with parsley, basil, dill, mint or any herb of choice)
15 almonds chopped
2 tablespoon olive oil
Pinch of salt
Olive oil and honey to garnish

Method
1. Pour boiling water onto the couscous and add the lemon juice, olive oil, and a pinch of salt to the mixture. Cover and let it sit as instructed on the package until all the water is absorbed.
2. Remove the arils from the pomegranate.
3. Chop up all the herbs, leafy greens, spring onion, and nuts.
4. Once the couscous has cooled down, air it with a fork so that it becomes fluffy. Add to it more olive oil, all the herbs, leafy greens, nuts, and lemon zest. Once the salad is mixed well, add the pomegranate at the very end, so that the arils remain intact.
5. Drizzle olive oil and honey before serving.
White Wall-rocket

Another common wild plant of the cruciferous family, similar to Perennial Wall-rocket, but an annual which bears white flowers. It consists of an erect, leafy, and hardy stem with tiny white bristles which forms many branches, each one ending with a raceme inflorescences of little white flowers. It is easy to find during the wet months of autumn and winter when it may form extensive white meadows.

The leaves are the edible parts and may be eaten raw or cooked. Unlike the other cruciferous wild greens mentioned so far, it has a very strong, piquant taste, reminiscent of mustard (Brassica nigra, Sinapis alba (seeds) – Mustard). One can mash or blend the foliage into a paste to be used as a mustard spread.

Preferred Habitats

Mainly on arable land, such as cultivated or fallow fields, gardens, orchards, vineyards, roadsides, etc.

Other ways to enjoy the plant would be to add it to fritters, omelets or adding finely chopped leaves in salads.
Alexanders

This wild plant is one of those formerly cultivated herbs that lost some of its popularity. It is native to the Mediterranean region, was a popular herb in antiquity, and continued to be cultivated until the medieval epoch. It became naturalized and established itself as a wild plant in Continental Europe.

Uses were found for the entire plant, roots included. The ripe seeds were ground to flavour dishes. According to the popular medicine of the time, the root juice was considered a diuretic and an appetite stimulant, while the juice of the whole plant was used to disinfect infected wounds and sores.

*Smyrnium olusatrum* prefers humid and shady places. Its root is robust and branched. The stem resembles that of celery with shredding occurring at the base where the leaf stem joins the main stem. The leaves are a vibrant green, large and serrated, while the flowers of this species are small with greenish-yellow petals.

The taste of alexanders is distinct but reminiscent of celery (*Apium graveolens – Karfus*). The stalks and leaves may be used in much the same way as celery, but one should be warned that alexanders has a more bitter taste. The fresh leaves can be added to make stocks for soups, used as a herb in risotto, added to roast potatoes and also enjoyed with cheese. The young shoots and stems can be stir-fried and enjoyed with a bit of oil. Tougher older stems may be boiled to become tender or else pickled in white vinegar. The roots can be scrubbed, peeled and roasted.
like one would parsnip or any other root vegetable. Another interesting way to enjoy Alexanders is to dip the flower heads in tempura batter and deep fry until golden brown and crispy.

**Preferred Habitats**

Shaded places, beneath carob trees, margins of fields in the shade of rubble walls, valley beds, etc.

**Caution**

Little is known about possible side-effects of Alexanders if eaten raw in very large doses. We recommend that people who are allergic to celery, pregnant women, and people suffering from goitre, to refrain from consuming it. As with all other wild plants, introduce them to your diet slowly and cautiously to be able to monitor any effect it might have on your body.

**Golden Samphire**

*Xorbebb / Xorbett*

*Limbara crithmoides*
Golden Samphire

*Limbarca crithmooides* is also known with the name of *Inula crithmooides*. Native to Western Europe and the Mediterranean region, the plant is especially found along many rocky coasts in the Maltese islands. It is an evergreen shrub bearing yellow flower-heads in summer and autumn.

The stem is woody and the leaves are numerous, narrow, and fleshy. The yellow flower heads occur in clusters mostly along the upper half of the branch, but the first flowers to develop are always present at the tip of the branch and new flowers run progressively downwards.

Throughout Europe, the *Limbarca crithmooides* has been consumed pickled or cooked, primarily used as a relish, mostly for salads since the leaves have a unique aromatic and salty taste. Moreover, the roots of the plant are said to have medicinal properties as a tonic.

The succulent fleshy leaves and young shoots may be eaten raw or cooked, and they may also be pickled in white vinegar.

**Preferred Habitats**

The dominant component of coastal vegetation all around the Maltese islands, particularly abundant in areas formerly subject to anthropogenic disturbance and subsequently abandoned. It is found on cliffs, boulder screes, valley sides, valley beds, saltmarshes, low-lying rocks, clay slopes, walls and rubble walls, old stabilized heaps of debris, etc.

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Garden Nasturtium  
*Kapuććinella / Kaboććinella*  
*Tropaeolum majus*
Garden Nasturtium

This plant originated in South America and is frequently grown for ornamentation purposes within the Maltese islands, often making its way into the wild where its stems form extensive mats. During the spring, one often finds the Broomrape (*Orobanche crenata – Budebbus*) growing parasitically on it.

*Tropaeolum majus*, a climbing plant, is characterized by roundish leaves and thin and fleshy stems, very delicate, which stretch and can reach up to three metres. They climb, wrap themselves to any support, and cover fences and pylons. The flowers are large and very abundant, they almost always have five petals, with colours ranging from red to yellow or orange. It is a self-seeding annual plant.

All of the aerial parts are edible. The very attractive multi-coloured large flowers are used as a garnish, but may also be eaten. The not yet opened buds can be preserved in vinegar or in salt and used just the same as capers. Thanks to their slightly spicy and aromatic flavor, the flowers and leaves can be used to enrich salads and sauces by providing a spicy note. You can also try adding nasturtium leaves and flowers to sandwiches and appetizers.

Preferred Habitats

Having spread rapidly after its introduction in Malta, garden nasturtium can be found at the margins of valley beds where the water is not deep, and where there is enough soil for the plant to root. The plant is more abundant in sunnier locations, but it has been observed also in shaded or semi-shaded parts of valleys. They can also be found growing at the peripheries of fields.

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Prickly-pear
*Bajtar tax-xewk / Ćuplajs*

*Opuntia ficus-indica*
Prickly pear

One of the most prominent features of the Maltese countryside and also one of the most highly esteemed plants among the local rural population. Its cladodes (palatal-bajtar) once served as the chief source of green fodder for ruminants during the summer drought, its flowers would be decocted as a remedy for cough. Rows of cultivated prickly pears also serve as live fences to keep trespassers and marauders out of private land.

Originating in Mexico, the prickly pear, or nopal, was cultivated for millennia and hybridized to such an extent as to lose the large thorns that characterize the other species of opuntia.

While prickly pear cultivation is infrequently practised nowadays, its semi-wild stands have much to offer the forager. It is advisable to wear protective gloves when handling any part of this spiny plant. One may pick its red or yellow or green fruits during the summer and early autumn. The fruits are best left to soak in cold water before being peeled in order to keep them fresh and to wash off some of the spines and dust from the peel. Peeling is done by first making a vertical incision with a knife in the skin, then separating and rolling the barrel-shaped lump of luscious pulp off the skin. The fruit can be enjoyed on its own, but if you are not a fan of the number of seeds in each fruit, you can juice the fruit, or follow the recipe to make a sorbet.

The younger green cladodes (cactus pads) may be grilled or barbecued after the spines have been removed. To savour them in a more creative way, they can be breaded and fried and sprinkled with icing sugar to be served as a dessert. They can also be used in fresh pasta, where the dehydrated leaves are ground and added to the flour and egg mixture. The internal part of the cladodes is filled with a mucus-like, gelatinous substance.

Preferred Habitats

Persisting in a semi-wild state as a relic of cultivation along the margins of fields and old farmsteads. Frequently colonizing wild areas such as cliffs, valley sides, valley beds, etc. forming dense stands among which pseudomaquis vegetation develops.

Try out this recipe created by Marrow Health.
www.marrowhealth.com

Pricky Pear sorbet

Ingredients
20 ml lemon juice
1kg peeled prickly pears
3tbs maple syrup or sweetener of choice, e.g. local honey

Method
1. Add all the ingredients to a high-speed blender, blend until you have achieved a purée-like consistency.
2. Pass the mixture through a kitchen strainer to remove the seeds.
3. Freeze the mixture for a few hours or overnight. Once frozen you may either crush the mixture with a fork to create a granita-like texture, alternatively you may pass the frozen mixture through a high-speed blender for a sorbet-like consistency.
Bramble / Blackberry

**Ghollieq**

*Rubus ulmifolius*

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**Bramble**

The term *Rubus* is derived from the Latin word for red. Bramble grows mainly in the presence of deep and slightly humid soils. The leaves are serrated with a dark green colour, while the colour of the petals varies from specimen to specimen, but generally are whitish with pink hues.

The blackish mulberry-like fruits are the edible part of this plant, being available from mid-summer to autumn. The edible fruit is composed of numerous small drupes, green at the beginning, then red and finally blackish at the peak of their maturity. One needs to make sure that the fruit is ripe for the sweetest taste. This is the point when the berries are dark, soft and can be removed easily from the plant. The berry can be used for the preparation of jams, cakes, tarts, fruit salads, and syrups. In addition, the leaves can also be picked in the springtime, dried and used to make a herbal tea. The fruits are rich in vitamin A and antioxidants.

**Preferred Habitats**

Valley beds, woodland, often forming dense impenetrable thickets, particularly in places repeatedly affected by fire.

**Caution**

Rodents (*Muridae – Gurdien* (sing.)) are very partial to blackberry fruits. Thus it is advisable to wash them thoroughly before consuming them in order to avoid inadvertently ingesting traces of rodent excrement.

Bramble thickets are the chief breeding habitat of the Cetti’s Warbler (*Cettia cetti – Baghal tal-Ghollieq*). Should you spot its nest or hear it calling very close by, please keep away in order to avoid causing disturbance.
Photo references

The illustrations in the book are an artistic representation of the plants and are not meant to be used as identification guides. Refer to the following photos to help you identify the plants. Further research to be certain that you have identified the plant correctly is a must prior to consuming any of the species mentioned (refer to the Foraging Guide on pages 5–7).

A website we recommend that has ample information is Malta Wild Plants by Stephan Mifsud where one can find further resources and photos.

www.maltawildplants.com
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10. White Wall-rocket
   Ġarġir abjad
   *Diploptaxis erucoides*
   p 30–31

13. Garder Nasturtium
   Kapuċċinella / Kaboċċinella
   *Tropaeolum majus*
   p 37–38

11. Alexanders
    Karfus il-hmir
    *Smyrnium olusatrum*
   p 32–34

14. Prickly pear
    Bajtar tax-xewk / Ċuplaixs
    *Opuntia ficus-indica*
   p 39–41

12. Golden Samphire
    Xorbebb / Xorbett
    *Limbara crithmoides*
   p 35–36

15. Bramble / Blackberry
    Għollieg
    *Rubus ulmifolius*
   p 42–43
Growing Together

The ways in which food is produced, consumed, and distributed is a major issue facing Europe and one that directly impacts the lives of young people across the continent. This publication has been produced as part of Growing Together, a cross-European project which aims to provide a voice for young people, particularly those from rural areas, in order to engage in crucial debates on the future of food production, as well as the wider debates on the future of Europe.

When we speak of food sovereignty and food systems we generally think of the intentional production of food, and its distribution, processing, and consumption. However, food sovereignty is also linked to the protection of land, conservation of traditional practices, and knowledge sharing. This publication is part of a process aimed at shedding light on the uses of wild edible plants benefiting both rural and urban communities.

This publication is only a part of a larger toolkit which can be found on www.foemaltc.org/goodfood

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Friends of the Earth Malta

www.foemalta.org

Friends of the Earth Malta has been active in the environmental field since 1985. It is an independent organisation that campaigns on some of today’s most pressing ecological and social issues. Friends of the Earth Malta fights for a better agricultural model and for people’s right to physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food.

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Explore 15 wild and edible plants that grow around the Maltese islands, and find out ways to cook and enjoy these foragables. From prickly pears to wild beet, there is a plant to enjoy in every season.

This publication is a part of a larger toolkit which can be found on www.foemalta.org/goodfood