

This month's recipes utilise ingredients which are in plentiful supply at the moment.

Rhubarb – Botanically rhubarb is a vegetable, but the edible stalks are treated as a fruit, despite their tart flavour. The leaves are not edible and should be trimmed off and composted.



Rhubarb has antibacterial properties and many health benefits, mainly in aiding digestion, reducing inflammation and helping to keep bones healthy.

Alexanders – Alexanders (*smyrniolum olusatrum*) is a biennial plant which can tolerate salt, so prefers coastal areas, but can also be found on roadsides, in gardens and in woodland. It is a



native of the Mediterranean region, but is now well established in coastal Britain. Horses, cows, sheep and other grazing mammals enjoy this plant. The Romans actually brought the plant to England with them to use as feed for their horses through the winter. Over 137 insects and bees have been recorded as being attracted to this plant, as it's one of the earliest spring flowering plants. Watch out for the vibrant green but camouflaged caterpillars of the Angle Shades moth that can be hard to spot.

However, over the last few years Alexanders has become a bit of a 'thug' plant and is growing so profusely around Tollesbury that it is drowning out other native plants. The

TCP is encouraging people to help control the plant by dead heading and composting the flowers before the seeds set, to minimise its spread. Apart from that – enjoy foraging and eating it!

There are some basic rules for foraging, for example:

- Do not pick without permission if you are on someone else's land
- Do not pick anything you can't identify
- Do not take too much – animals and insects rely on plants too!
- Do not harvest in polluted areas, such as roadsides, along dog walks etc.
- Do wash everything you pick really well – and also your hands!
- Do invest in a good field guide to assist you in identification and uses
- Do take part in foraging workshops if you are interested in the subject