



Summer Newsletter

You really get a feel for summer, these hot weather months really do show off bright and colourful flowers setting the scene for stunning landscapes all over the country.

The abundance of potential foraged goodies seems limitless. Fruit bearing trees, and bushes grow seamlessly amongst edible flowers and weeds.

My preferred planting style is to be natural as possible so that its in keeping with a wild aspect. The introduction of a wildlife pond has attracted many more insects, the use of ground covering plants such as alpine strawberries are quick to spread under a canopy of trees for that feel of woodlands.

There are plenty of apple trees around my way with lots of fruit that is in the process

of ripening, these will be ready for our consumption towards the end of August into September with many varieties to choose from each with their own flavour profile. Ones that have sparked my curiosity more this year are crab apples.

Malus sylvestris is the common crab apple, one you will see most often and mainly grown as an ornamental tree in gardens for aesthetics, these apples are small, growing in clusters along branches. The colours of these range from a typical green to a rosy red. I have however seen perfectly round purple fruits with a pink tinged flesh which can be made into a glorious purple jelly packed full of sweetness.

Rowan, *Sorbus aucuparia*, is another on my list for foraging. The leaves remind me of

feathers running parallel to each other down a stem, beautiful creamy white flowers grow in dense clusters which later turn into bright orange/red fruits desired by birds and foragers alike.

These berries have multiple uses, made into jam, used in chutneys, and brewed to make a delicious rowan wine.



Pictured *Sorbus aucuparia* Rowan.



Pictured *Malus 'Royalty'*.

Wild Strawberry

Fragaria vesca



These strawberries grow mainly in woodlands under trees, hidden within cervices, along hedgerows, although these are not an easy one to find. The best way to see these in all their glory would be to grow at your home, their tiny appearance would lead you to believe them to be a pointless endeavour in harvesting, but these fruits are packed full of flavour and much sweeter than the cultivated strawberry. I have been growing these for years in my own garden

adapting to their growing conditions so that I can get the absolute best out of them.

You can even get white alpine these days which give a great contrast of colour to the garden with a different flavour profile to the standard, but also these hidden gems are unnoticed by birds and other pests that like to eat away at your hard work.

Prunus Species

‘There are many different varieties of Prunus growing around us, here are some that produce fruits.’



Prunus spinosa,
Blackthorn, Sloe berry.

Sloe are traditionally used in the process of distilling gin. The fruits begin to grow in late summer on shrubs that flowered in spring. I have tried these raw and wouldn't recommend to anyone to eat these in large quantities, it is not very palatable, it has an instant dry mouth sensation. Although there is some sweetness to sloe it does have a strange after taste in chutneys or jam. I haven't found any other use for it

other than in the process of gin making.

Prunus domestica, common plum

You can find these trees along dirt tracks in between hedgerows with pinnate leaves bearing green or red edible fruits. They are a good find on a hot summer. The fruits are sweet when ripe, you can often tell this from the softness of the fruit. I have been lucky enough to find green plums, very similar in shape and size, but these



Prunus fruticosa,
European dwarf cherry.

This cherry is not native to the UK but does grow here among other species. The two tones of yellow and red are a sight to see growing in clusters all down the stems of the trees. They are fully ripened when red and can be consumed as another edible treat.

Summer fruits are ripe and ready for harvest, my currant bushes have done well this year providing me with berries to enjoy as a snack or to use in baking. Many flowers are blooming this year, it's nice to

see them growing out in their natural habitat. Some plants give off aromas from their flowers or leaves.

Lavandula angustifolia, lavender is a shrub with scented purple flowers on long

green stems. There are many uses for lavender whether it be in cosmetics, medicine or cooking. Below are a couple of recipes incorporating summer fruits and lavender into baking.

Lavender Carrot Cake

Ingredients

225ml vegetable oil
2 large eggs
140g grated carrot
125g caster sugar
75g soft brown sugar
175g self-raising flour
1/2tsp baking powder
1tsp ground cinnamon
1tsp ground cardamom
10g dried lavender*

For the cream cheese frosting

100g soft cream cheese
50g icing sugar, sifted
50g softened unsalted butter
Few drops of purple food colouring
1tsp vanilla paste/extract
Lavender sugar to garnish*

‘Blitzing the lavender in a spice grinder to a powdered form, then incorporating it into the batter improved the overall flavour of the cake.’

To make the lavender sugar, combine a small pinch of dried flowers with 50g white sugar and blitz in a spice grinder to resemble fine sugar.

Method

Preheat the oven to 170 fan and line a 1lb loaf tin with parchment paper.

Combine the oil, eggs, grated carrot, and sugars in a bowl and whisk until well combined. Sift in the dry ingredients, then add the dried lavender and mix till fully incorporated.

Pour the mixture into a lined 1lb loaf tin and bake for 40—50 minutes. Insert a skewer into the centre of the cake, if the skewer comes out clean then it is ready to be taken out the oven and left to cool on a cooling rack.

To make the cream cheese frosting, first whip up the butter with 25g icing sugar until light and pale. Add in the remaining

sugar along with the cream cheese, food colouring and vanilla. Beat together until combined.

Once the cake has cooled spread the frosting over the top and garnish with a dusting of lavender sugar.

Serve and enjoy.



Summer Fruit Drizzle Cake

Ingredients

175g unsalted butter
175g caster sugar, see note*
2 large eggs, beaten
1/2 tsp vanilla bean paste or
1 tsp vanilla extract
175g self raising flour
1/2 tsp baking powder
1 lemon, zested and juiced
125g fresh summer fruits

For the drizzle

100g fresh summer fruits
100g granulated sugar
Juice of lemon
Thyme and Cornflowers to garnish (optional)

*If you start by combining the caster sugar with the lemon zest, rubbing together between your fingers it imparts the flavour of the lemon into the sugar. Of course this is an optional choice.

Method

Preheat the oven to 170 fan and line a 1lb loaf tin with greaseproof paper.

Cream together the butter and sugar until soft and pale then beat in the eggs a bit at a time not to curdle the mixture. Add in the vanilla giving another mix.

Sift the flour and baking powder into the mixture, then using a spatula, gently fold in until well combined.

Pour 1/3 of the mix into the loaf tin, spreading it out to the sides. Place a layer of fruits on this then add another 1/3 of batter on top repeating with the fruit.

Finally spread over the remaining batter and bake in the oven for 45 minutes—1 hour until browned and fluffy. Check if it is baked by inserting a skewer into the middle. If it comes out clean then remove from the oven, placing on a wire rack to cool.

To make the drizzle combine the fruit, sugar and lemon, stirring to combine. Allow the fruit to macerate in the sugar until you get a rich fruity liquid, poke some holes in the cake then drizzle this mixture over the top leaving it to set and completely cool.

Garnish with fresh lemon thyme and cornflower petals.



For more information and recipes you can visit my website at www.wildpicks.co.uk or follow me on social media.



‘Fruits grown from my garden went into making this cake, which included jostaberry, blackcurrants, redcurrants, strawberries, raspberries and some cranberries.’



Cape Gooseberry

Physalis peruviana

I started growing this plant last spring. It did seem promising with the hope of fruits in the coming summer but the plant remained green, grew to a substantial size only producing smooth, slightly hairy leaves. It was very unproductive that

season and as the hot weather diminished the plant began to die back as the cold crept in. I wanted to research some more on this plant and the growing habits it has.

Physalis is a perennial, meaning it can come back year after year but our climate is not really the best for these.

I overwintered the plant in my bedroom all over autumn and winter. It grew huge and almost took over.

By the time spring came back once again it was time to judge when was the perfect temperature for this to go back outside.

I lost a few plants this way with me being slightly premature in the season but eventually the weather became warmer and it was time to get them positioned.

Although this one plant has had it challenges and the amount of time it's taken to grow, flowers began to bloom followed by these lantern shaped capsules containing a small orange berry. *Physalis*, cape gooseberry has sweet notes with some tartness, it's a tiny citrus burst rich in vitamin C.



Pictured Jostaberry