

Wild Herbs in Spring ~ by Sabine Alex



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Actually, it all started a few years ago in a small city close to Berlin, Germany at the weekly market. There, wild herbs and flowers were presented at a stand in pretty willow baskets. There were different mixtures. I was thrilled by the taste of this wild herb salad mix, which I still don't know. Every Saturday I went to the market hoping to get some of the herbs. At that time, I would never have come up with the idea of hunting for the wild herbs

myself. I actually had parks and forests in front of my nose. Somehow it took me some time to get to the first plants bit by bit. I started with wild garlic, which grew in large fields nearby. There I met some Russian women who harvested the wild garlic in bags. I still wonder what they did with the quantities – at least I overcame my fears and became a collector. Later it really started after I had watched some great videos on YouTube.

On my last walk – meanwhile in the north of Germany just before Denmark – on the way to a forest clearing, on which wild garlic grows. Several bunches of garlic rake were already waiting for me, of which I plucked some leaves. A little further on, a huge field of wild garlic appeared, from which I could just harvest a few closed buds to put them in pumpkin seed oil and enjoy pasta. Finally, a place where I could safely collect the herbs. Unfortunately, there are fewer and fewer natural meadows or areas on which one or the other herb could be found. Many meadows, by mowing several times, then have only a few species, which can still settle there. I try to avoid the plants on the edge of sprayed fields.

It was only through the search for wild herbs that I realized how few natural areas are still there. So, before spring is over, here is my little compilation of the delicious Wild herbs that can be found in spring: above all the already mentioned wild garlic, in addition to Giersch-greedy, Daisies, and dandelions. Slightly unknown are meadow foam weed [*Cardamine pratensis*], garlic rake [*Alliaria petiolata*] – my absolute favorite, as well as Gundermann [*Glechoma hederacea*] and Wiesenlabkraut [*Galium mollugo*]. Of course, there are many more herbs to eat. That's just a small selection.

[NOTE: Some of these may not grow in the U.S.]

Wild garlic

The persevering plant from the genus *Allium* is related to onion and garlic as well as chives and is common in wild growth, it grows in rather shady humus-rich forests. The

name probably comes from the fact that bears actually make their way over this herb after the winter. It is probably a real cleansing herb: I myself wait and yearn every year for the first sheets, which I then stuff into myself, until they then retreat back into the ground after the time of flowering. The wild garlic is theoretically to be confused with the leaves of the poisonous lily of the place. However, at the latest, by the smell of the wild garlic and also by the style approach, **one can recognize what it is about.** If you are worried, you should google again. The wild garlic is well known as a substitute for garlic and one is supposed not to evaporate the unpopular Knobi smell so much after consumption. However, I cannot confirm that. The wild garlic leaves can be used in many ways: snipped into the salad, processed as butter, pesto and oil, or dried or frozen, the herb can be used beyond spring. The sweetly tender flowers are an edible decoration or can be placed as a closed bud best in oil. Pumpkin seed oil is particularly well suited: a real delicacy that I saved frozen in jars until the winter.

Giersch

If you want to harvest wild herbs for the smoothie already in spring, the Giersch is the right starter herb! Giersch is more known than annoying weed, which is difficult to remove from the garden. But you can also gain something very positive from the greed if you venture into its workmanship in the kitchen. As early as March, the Giersch with its three-part leaf sections can be seen shooting out of the ground in many places. It was probably already consumed abundantly by the Romans. It can be enjoyed raw, for example as a salad supplement. For this, the young shoots are best used. In terms of taste, the young light green leaves are reminiscent of a mixture of parsley and carrot and can be served, for example, with salad or roughly chopped in mashed potatoes. Both young and older leaves can be processed in the quiche, as herbal spinach, in runs or soups.

Daisy

Everyone knows the daisy. The pretty little flowers are very decorative on sweet or savory foods, can be ideally mixed into the wild salad just like the still closed flowers. The young leaves look very similar to the field salad and can also be added to salads. The daisy leaves taste aromatically spicy (slightly sour), the flowers sweet-nutty.

Dandelion

Also the dandelion with its jagged leaves is one of the edible wild herbs. Both flower and leaves are edible, especially the young, mild leaves are suitable for the smoothie in combination with daisies, greed or goose-fingered herb. Otherwise, the dandelion is suitable as a salad side dish. Syrup and jelly are extracted from the flowers of the dandelion.

Meadow foam herb If you are

lucky, you will still find meadows that are crossed by the delicate meadow foam herb with its pale pink to pale purple colored flowers. Mostly, however, these plants are only occasionally found on field and meadow edges. The plant flowers from the end of March to June, until August the leaves are present and can also be collected. The young shoots and leaves taste similar to cress and fit into herb quark or salads, the edible

flowers of this fine condiment fit as decoration.

Garlic rake

Similar to wild garlic, the modern herb kitchen gradually rediscovers the garlic rake. In the Middle Ages, the garlic rake with its peppery-garlic-like taste was mainly used by the poorer population, who could not afford the expensive spices. The garlic smell is created when the leaves are rubbed. The garlic rake prefers to grow in the open countryside, at forest or field edges. It can reach a high of up to one meter and is usually found in small groups. The lower leaves are rather heart-shaped, whereas the upper leaves resemble somewhat the shape of nettles. From April, the white flowers will be on display, which are arranged like a grape. Personally, I like the leaves of the garlic rake in the salad or as an herb chop on the bread. Another use would be garlic butter or savory pancakes with chopped leaves.

Gundermann

The Gundermann belongs to the family of the Lipflowers is quite common, in forests, on meadows, on hedges and fences. It forms for a very long time and is therefore also very lively. The kidney-shaped leaves have a notched leaf edge. When rubbed, a very intense spicy smell is created. The taste is quite intense and tart, therefore the Gundermann can also be used as a salt substitute. The leaves can be used as a spice for soups, vegetables, herbal quark or roasts – or used in small amounts as a salad supplement. The purple flowers are also suitable for salads as well as for decorating food. The blue-violet flowers stand in the leaf axels and have an upper and lower lip. The lower lip is dark dotted.

Wiesenlabkraut

The Meadow Weed can be found on meadows, on bushes and forest edges. It blooms from May to September. The leaves, stems and flowers of the plant are used primarily, the delicate leaves and flowers with the super mild taste fit well into a green smoothie or the young shoots can be used as a wonderful alternative to spinach and other leafy vegetables. Leaves and stems fit into raw food salads and other vegetable dishes. The flowers can be spread over salads. The leaves and stems of the meadow weed can be found almost all year round, even under the snow grows the robust, but delicate Pflanze. Es of course there are much more edible wild herbs that can be found in spring.

As usual, this summary is meant to adapt somewhat to times when the vegetable rack in the supermarket may not be so full. In addition, wild herbs are of course extremely healthy.

Wild Herbs in Spring, *Sabine*

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