

Foraging Wild Plants & Fungi — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into field-ready practice. You will drill the five-point identification protocol, build a personal toxic-avoid list, create a seasonal calendar for your own region, and log every harvest so your skill compounds safely year over year. Work through one section per module and keep the templates with you in the field.

Foundations of Safe Identification

Internalize the safety rules and practice running real candidates through the five-point protocol.

Exercise: Run the Five-Point Protocol on a Living Specimen

Find any common wild plant or mushroom near your home that you do NOT intend to eat. Work through all five points in order, writing a full sentence for each. The goal is the discipline of the process, not the identification result.

- Habitat and host: describe exactly where it grows, the soil, light, and for fungi the tree or wood it grows on.

- Overall form and key structures: note size, growth habit, and for plants the leaf arrangement and stem shape, or for fungi gills versus pores and the stem base.

- Senses: record any distinctive smell such as garlic, almond, anise, or radish, and the result of a spore print if it is a gilled mushroom.

- Verdict: state honestly whether you reached 100 percent certainty, and if not, exactly which feature was missing.

Worksheet: My Personal Trusted-Reference Stack

Assemble at least two independent, region-specific references plus a human resource. Fill in your actual sources so you never rely on a single app for an edibility decision.

Primary regional field guide (title and author)

Dedicated mushroom guide with spore colors and look-alike warnings (title)

Identification app(s) used for learning only (name)

Local foraging group, mycological society, or mentor (name and contact)

My personal rule for when an app result is enough (write: never for edibility)

Checklist: Foraging Kit Ready-Check

- Basket or paper bags packed (never plastic) so fungi can breathe and drop spores
- Small sharp knife for clean cuts and examining the base and flesh
- Soft brush for cleaning dirt in the field instead of washing

- 10x hand lens for tiny diagnostic features
- Notebook or phone for habitat, date, host tree, and spore-print notes
- Separate container reserved for unidentified study specimens

Edibles and Their Toxic Look-Alikes

Build the habit of always pairing every edible with the dangerous double it could be confused for.

Worksheet: Edible-vs-Look-Alike Comparison Card

Pick one beginner edible from the course (for example wild garlic, chanterelle, or giant puffball). Complete this card so you can recite the separating features from memory before you ever harvest it.

Edible species (common and scientific name)

Its most dangerous look-alike (common and scientific name)

Decisive separating feature number 1 (e.g. spore print color, host tree, smell)

Decisive separating feature number 2

The single test I will always perform before eating (e.g. cut puffball top to bottom)

Where this look-alike grows in my area so I can expect it

Exercise: Draft My Deadly-Avoid List

Write out the deadly species a beginner must never harvest, from memory first, then check against the course. This is as important as any pick list.

- List the lethal fungi to avoid entirely, with the key warning features (white gills, ring, and a cup at the base).
 - List the lethal carrot-family plants and why you avoid the whole Apiaceae family as a beginner.
 - Explain in your own words why cooking, drying, or freezing does NOT make a deadly Amanita safe.
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Checklist: Before-I-Harvest-Any-Fungus Safety Gate

- I have taken a spore print and recorded its color
- I have confirmed the host (soil, wood, or specific tree) matches the species
- I have checked for a ring on the stem and a cup or volva at the base
- I have ruled out every look-alike listed in my comparison card
- I have cross-checked against at least two regional references
- My certainty is 100 percent; if not, I am not eating it

The Seasonal Foraging Calendar

Translate the general foraging year into a precise, observed calendar for your own region.

Worksheet: Map a Reliable Foraging Site

Choose one real location you can legally access and document it so it becomes an annual resource. Detail matters: you want to find this exact spot again next year.

Site name and how to get there

Access permission status (public right, landowner consent, or off-limits)

Host trees present (oak, beech, birch, pine, elder, hawthorn, etc.)

Aspect and conditions (slope direction, sun or shade, damp or dry)

Species observed here and the months they appeared

Notes on the weather that triggered the best finds

Exercise: Predict the Autumn Fungi Flush

Use the course rule that mushrooms fruit after warm, wet weather followed by cooler nights. Track conditions and make a real prediction for one local wood.

- Record the rainfall and night temperatures over the past two weeks for your area.
 - Predict the date window when you expect a flush, and name the host trees you will target.
 - After your visit, record what you actually found and how accurate your prediction was.
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Checklist: Year-Round Calendar Build Steps

- Listed every species I can confidently identify with its available months
- Mapped at least three reliable locations with host trees and access notes
- Noted the weather triggers, especially rain plus cool nights for autumn fungi
- Recorded harvest amounts and taste notes to improve next year
- Scheduled winter study sessions for tree ID and toxic-list review

Ethical Harvesting and Safe Preparation

Lock in the sustainability, legal, and kitchen-safety habits that protect the resource and you.

Exercise: Plan an Ethical Harvest

Before a real outing, plan how you will apply the 1-in-20 rule and leave-no-trace principles to a specific patch.

- Estimate how many of your target species are present and what one in twenty would be.
 - State how you will cut rather than uproot, and how you will avoid trampling.
 - Confirm the legal status of harvesting at this site and whether any protected species are present.
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Worksheet: New-Species Tasting Trial Record

Complete this whenever you eat a wild species for the first time. The single-portion, eat-it-alone, wait-24-hours method is your last line of defense.

Species (confirmed by full protocol and two references)

Recommended preparation used (e.g. cooked thoroughly, blanched, never raw)

Small portion eaten alone, not mixed with other new foods (describe)

Time eaten and time the 24-hour observation window ends

Any digestive or allergic reaction noticed (yes or no, with details)

Decision: safe to add to my repertoire, or stop and reidentify

Checklist: Kitchen Safety Final Gate

- Species confirmed by the full five-point protocol and at least two references
- Cooked the recommended way; no fungi eaten raw and cyanogenic species fully cooked
- First taste is a small portion, eaten alone, with a 24-hour wait planned
- Confirmed edibles kept separate from any study specimens
- Preserved foods labeled with species, date, and source location
- When in any doubt at the stove, I will reidentify or discard rather than eat

Your Action Plan

1. Memorize the deadly-avoid list (white-gilled Amanita and the whole carrot family) before your first outing.
2. Choose three beginner-safe species with no deadly look-alikes and learn them at every life stage.
3. Assemble your trusted-reference stack: two regional guides plus a local group or mentor.
4. Build your physical foraging kit using the ready-check, including a basket and a hand lens.
5. Practice the five-point protocol and a spore print on non-edible specimens until it is automatic.
6. Create a comparison card for every edible you plan to harvest, pairing it with its toxic double.
7. Map at least three legal, reliable foraging sites with host trees and access permissions.
8. Forage with the seasons using your calendar, watching the weather for the autumn fungi flush.
9. Apply the 1-in-20 rule and leave-no-trace on every harvest, and uproot nothing without consent.
10. Trial each new species with a small cooked portion eaten alone, then wait 24 hours before more.

