

Foraging for wild garlic (*Allium ursinum* L.)

Wild garlic became red listed in 2021 because of excess harvesting in recent years. If this over exploitation continues, wild garlic is in danger of extinction in Norway. The problem is most severe in the densely populated areas in the Oslofjord region.

The right to roam grants everyone free access to the countryside and includes the right to forage (with some exceptions). As an integral part of Norwegian culture, there is traditionally a common understanding that this freedom comes with the responsibility to act respectfully in nature. The perhaps most important principle, "Leave No Trace", ensures that nature can be enjoyed by everyone also in the future. Unfortunately, there are signs that these traditions and principles are threatened. There are increasing occurrences of individuals collecting several kilos or even tens of kilos of wild garlic, much more than can be considered a reasonable amount for personal use. Some are perhaps just eager and overambitious, others are professionals harvesting for sale to restaurants and food-markets. These practices in combination with the fact that wild garlic has become a "trend food" has resulted in a non-sustainable excess harvesting.

It is of crucial importance to stop this trend now, before it is too late. When one species is lost, it affects the whole ecosystem making it less resilient and more susceptible to harmful influences. It would of course also be sad for us humans if this beautiful and useful plant were to disappear.

To address these issues, we have made a set of guidelines that should be followed when foraging for wild garlic. By following these guidelines you contribute to the survival of the species. We encourage everyone to follow and spread the word about the guidelines as well as the principle of "Leave No Trace" in the Norwegian countryside.

- Foraging is illegal in nature reserves, this includes all plants, fungi and berries. You can view a map of nature reserves in Norway here (in Norwegian): [Naturbase kart \(miljodirektoratet.no\)](https://naturbase.kart.miljodirektoratet.no)
- It is illegal to collect wild garlic (and all other wild edibles) for sale. The landowner owns the rights to commercial exploitation of these resources. Selling wild edibles on someone else's land is theft. Seek advice from Bærum kommune if you want more information on how to make an agreement with landowners.
- Only take what you can use. Make a plan for what you will use the wild garlic for before you go foraging. We encourage moderation.
- Carefully cut a couple of leaves from each plant and leave roots and flowers intact. This way the plant survives, ensuring next year's harvest.
- Timing is everything, taste before you pick. In late season the plants develop a strong bitter taste and are not fit for consumption.
- Beware that the poisonous plant lily of the valley can be mistaken as wild garlic. A strong smell of garlic and/or onions is the safest way to know you found the right plant.

Tip: You can grow wild garlic as a decorative and tasty garden plant. Both seeds and seedlings are available in most garden centres.

Useful links:

The right to roam in Norway on visitnorway: [The right to roam | Guidelines to roaming where you want \(visitnorway.com\)](https://www.visitnorway.com/en/roaming)

The county governor in Oslo and Viken on wild garlic in nature reserves (in Norwegian): [Planter i naturreservater er fredet – dette gjelder også ramsløk | Statsforvalteren i Oslo og Viken](https://www.osloregionen.no/planter-i-naturreservater-er-fredet-dette-gjelder-ogsaa-ramsløk)

Protected areas in Bærum (in Norwegian): [Naturbase kart \(miljodirektoratet.no\)](https://naturbase.kart.miljodirektoratet.no)

Wild garlic on the Norwegian red-list (in Norwegian): [Allium ursinum - Rødlista 2021 - Artsdatabanken](https://artsdatabanken.no)

Did you know that Ramsåsen in Bærum might be named after the strong smell of wild garlic which is also called ramsons (or "ramsløk" in Norwegian)? Source: [lokalhistoriewiki.no/wiki/Ramsås_\(Bærum\)](https://lokalhistoriewiki.no/wiki/Ramsås_(Bærum))

