

Bushcrafter's Foraging Field Checklist

Before you pick (site and context)

- **Permission and access:** You are allowed to be here and to pick here.
- **Contamination check:** Avoid roadsides, sprayed margins, industrial sites, old tips, floodwater zones, and obvious runoff channels.
- **Livestock and dogs:** Treat heavy grazing areas, dog walking hotspots, and fouled ground as higher risk.
- **Water quality:** If you would not drink the water, be cautious about harvesting nearby.
- **Weather and timing:** Wet, frost, heat, and wind can change appearance and flavour. Do not assume.
- **Your plan:** What are you actually collecting today and why? If you cannot name the purpose, do not pick.

Identification confidence test (no guessing)

- **Rule:** Never eat any wild plant, fungus, or seaweed unless you are **100% sure** of its identification and suitability.
- **Multiple features:** Confirm at least **3 independent features** (not just one).
- **Habitat match:** Does the habitat make sense for this species?
- **Season match:** Is it plausible for this time of year and your altitude?
- **Lookalike check:** Name at least **one dangerous lookalike** and confirm why this is not it.
- **Whole organism:** Check the whole thing, not just the bit you want to eat.
- **If anything feels off:** Walk away. There is always another patch.

Fungi specific rule (extra strict)

- **Never guess with fungi.** If you are not 100% sure, do not pick for food.
- **Condition matters:** Avoid old, soggy, mouldy, or insect ridden specimens.
- **One at a time:** Keep unknowns separate. Do not mix with food.

Coastal and seaweed check (if applicable)

- **Clean water only:** Avoid harbours, marinas, sewage outfalls, and runoff zones.
- **Tides and safety:** Know the tide times. Do not take risks on rocks or in swell.
- **Legal and local rules:** Follow local bylaws and protected area guidance.

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Harvesting and handling (stay safe and keep quality)

- **Take less than you think:** Small amounts from multiple spots beats stripping one patch.
- **30% rule:** Take no more than about 30% of what is available in a patch.
- **Leave the first and last:** Do not clear a patch. Leave it to recover.
- **Use clean kit:** Knife, bag, and hands. Do not contaminate your harvest.
- **Separate by type:** Keep plants, fungi, and coastal items separate.
- **Label unknowns:** If you are collecting for later ID, label with location, habitat, and date.

Final decision rule (before it goes in your mouth)

- **If you cannot explain your ID clearly:** Do not eat it.
- **If you would not feed it to someone you care about:** Do not eat it.
- **When in doubt:** Leave it out.

Ethics and impact

- **Respect the place:** Do not trample, rake, or damage habitat.
- **Leave it better:** Close gates, stick to paths where needed, take litter out.
- **Wildlife first:** Assume you are sharing. Leave plenty.

If you think you have made a mistake

- **Stop eating immediately.**
- **Save a sample** of what was eaten (or a clear photo) for identification.
- **Seek medical advice quickly** if symptoms appear or you are concerned.

Next step (optional)

If you want the repeatable method behind safe identification, start with [The Forager's ID System](#). If you upgrade to the [Beginner Course](#) within 7 days of the ID system, your purchase is credited.

Disclaimer

This checklist is for educational purposes only. Never eat any wild plant, fungus, or seaweed unless you are 100% sure of its identification and suitability. Conditions vary by location, altitude, and weather. Follow local laws and safe harvesting practice.