

Foraging with Friends of the Rec

You'll come across a lot of edible wild plants in the in and around the rec. One to look out for in late May to early June is **Elderflower** which grows in both Walden and Chislehurst Rec. as well as Whytes woods.

What to look for:

The trees are small hedgerow trees with corky bark. The leaves comprise 5-7 oval leaflets with feathery edges. The white petals are small and clustered but form an umbel that is broad and scented.

Take a pair of sharp scissors and remove flower heads just below where all the small stems meet the main stem – you want as little of the green stem in your recipes as possible. Gather only a few flowerheads from each tree to allow as many as possible to develop into berries – a crucial late summer food source for birds, mammals, and insects.

How to use:

The flowers are high in antioxidant and vitamin C which is great for boosting your immune system. They can flavour jam, gin, ice creams and tea.

The most popular usage is as cordial. Which is a quite easy and tasty drink to make.



Elderflower Cordial



Ingredients

- 30 elderflower heads
- 1.7litres/3 pints boiling water
- 900g/2lb caster sugar
- 50g/2oz citric acid (available from chemists)
- 2 unwaxed oranges, sliced
- 3 unwaxed lemons, sliced

Method

- Gently rinse over the elderflowers to remove any dirt or little creatures.
- Pour the boiling water over the sugar in a very large mixing bowl. Stir well and leave to cool.
- Add the citric acid, the orange and lemon slices, and then the flowers.
- Leave in a cool place for 24 hours, stirring occasionally.
- Strain through some muslin and transfer to sterilised bottles.

Enjoy!

