



SRGC

----- Bulb Log Diary -----

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BULB LOG 48.....26th November 2014





The opening page shows a group of **Galanthus reginae olgae** flowers in the protected environment of one of the bulb houses while the group above are fending for themselves fighting their way through the retreating leaves of ferns and hellebores.



Narcissus 'Cedric Morris'

Also just coming into flower, and doing much better than the ones in pots, is Narcissus 'Cedric Morris'.

When we have a sufficient bulbs of a plant I like try some outside so we do not only grow them under glass.

It used to be that I considered the ones planted in the garden as the risk while those in the bulb house were my insurance.

Experience has shown me that it is sometimes the other way around when the potted ones suffer a set back

while the outside ones continue to thrive. The best method is to spread your risk and never put all your eggs into one basket – or bulbs into one pot.



Crocus attack

I think this is one of the dismays of anyone who grows bulbs – finding a rodent has been digging up and eating your precious corms.



I cannot remember it happening to us at this time of year before. We do suffer some losses every year but it is normally later in the winter when the new corms are forming. These of course are autumn flowering forms so the new corm will have started to grow and now it has been eaten. Growing the bulbs in sand makes it very easy for the mice to dig the corms so I have no other option than to do a bit of trapping to bring the rodent

numbers down to a more balanced level.



Narcissus albicans seedlings

There is plenty of leaf growth in the bulb houses including these *Narcissus albicans* seedlings - most growing for their second year being joined by a few late germinators. The seed was sown deep so that when the young bulbs germinate they are already at a favourable depth.



Narcissus seed germination



Looking at how *Narcissus* seed germinates shows us that the young bulb forms directly beside the seed so if sown on the surface that is where it has to survive until it can start to take itself down, well into the second year of growth. Sowing deeply puts the young bulbs in a much better place so they can direct all their energies into growing their bulbs rather than having to make their way down.

Narcissus bulbocodium

I cannot remember ever having this form of *Narcissus bulbocodium* in flower this early before and suspect that it is just the strangely mild conditions over the last few months that has encouraged this individual to flower now.



Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister'

Some of the flowers on Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister' have now expanded to their full size revealing the beauty that attracted me to name this seedling.

The base of the tube is green with prominent stripes extending all along the length of the petals. As the flower matures the green on the petals fades leaving just green tips.



Narcissus 'Craigton Chorister'



Narcissus romieuxii seedling

Growing bulbs from seed has to be one of the most rewarding gardening pleasures – growing any plant from seed is exciting but I think the extra long wait before we see a flower from some bulbs heightens the pleasure. Typically for *Narcissus romieuxii* the filaments and style of this seedling are the same yellow colour as the corona.



I can never resist the temptation to be the pollinator and in some cases I will simply use my fingers to transfer pollen from one flower to another. Even though it has been mild I have not seen any pollinating insects about so the only way these flowers would get pollinated is if nearby flowers physically touched each other. If you want to get some seeds it is best to do the pollen transfer using a brush, fingers or whatever else comes to hand. Ideally I should keep careful records noting and labelling each flower I fertilise with the name of the pollen parent and in the past I did keep extensive records of the crosses but now I often just spread pollen around.



Narcissus romieuxii seedling

As we have grown so many Narcissus in a relatively small area we have many hybrids, in fact these plants are so promiscuous that I have to take care to keep species true. I take great delight in seeing these seedlings and all the variation that they display.



Narcissus seedling ex Narcissus ‘Camoro’

Pure white forms, note the filaments and style are also pure white, are so beautiful – a sister seedling to Narcissus ‘Craigton Chorister’ - this form has a more funnel shaped corona with a scalloped edge.



**Narcissus seedling
ex Narcissus 'Camoro'**

Yet another selection from the same seed has a rolled back flange to the edge of the corona.

Viewed from the side the long funnel shaped corona shows the influence of *Narcissus cantabricus*.



Narcissus seedling ex Narcissus 'Camoro'



Tulipa koyuncui

Raised from seed collected near the Isak Pasa Palace in Turkey this is a recently described species, *Tulipa koyuncui*, similar to *Tulipa biflorus* but with yellow flowers. I am sure that it is only flowering at this time because of how unseasonably mild the temperatures have been since I watered. It seems relatively easy to grow and is a welcome small yellow tulip to have in our collection – as soon as I have built up the number of bulbs I will try some outside.



Tecophilaea cyanocrocus leichtlinii

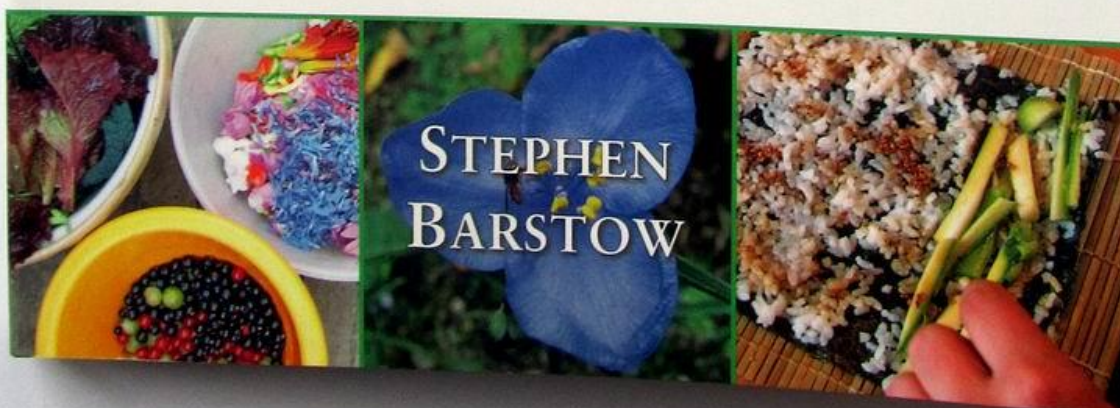
There are lots of shoots appearing in the pots now – such as from this pot of *Tecophilaea cyanocrocus leichtlinii* corms. It is normal in our conditions for these shoots to appear at this time, the flowers will come in the spring.



These *Ornithogalum narbonense* seedlings germinated outside – when I spotted the new growth I brought them under the protection of the glasshouse. Unfortunately I must have also brought in a slug as they have since been grazed down – one blue slug pellet was enough to catch out the culprit.



AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 PLANTS



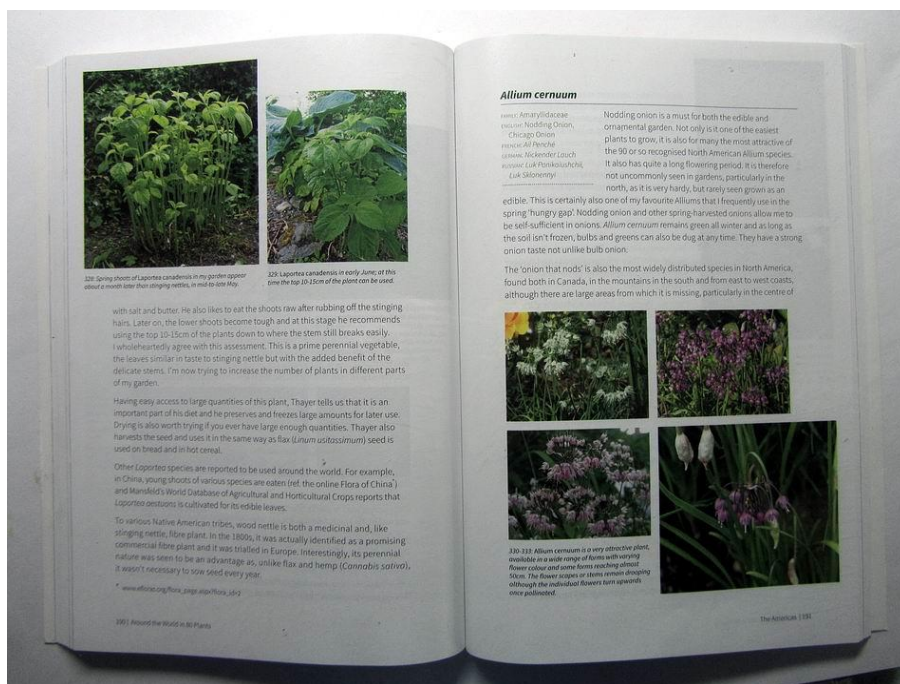
[Around the World in 80 Plants by Stephen Barstow](#)

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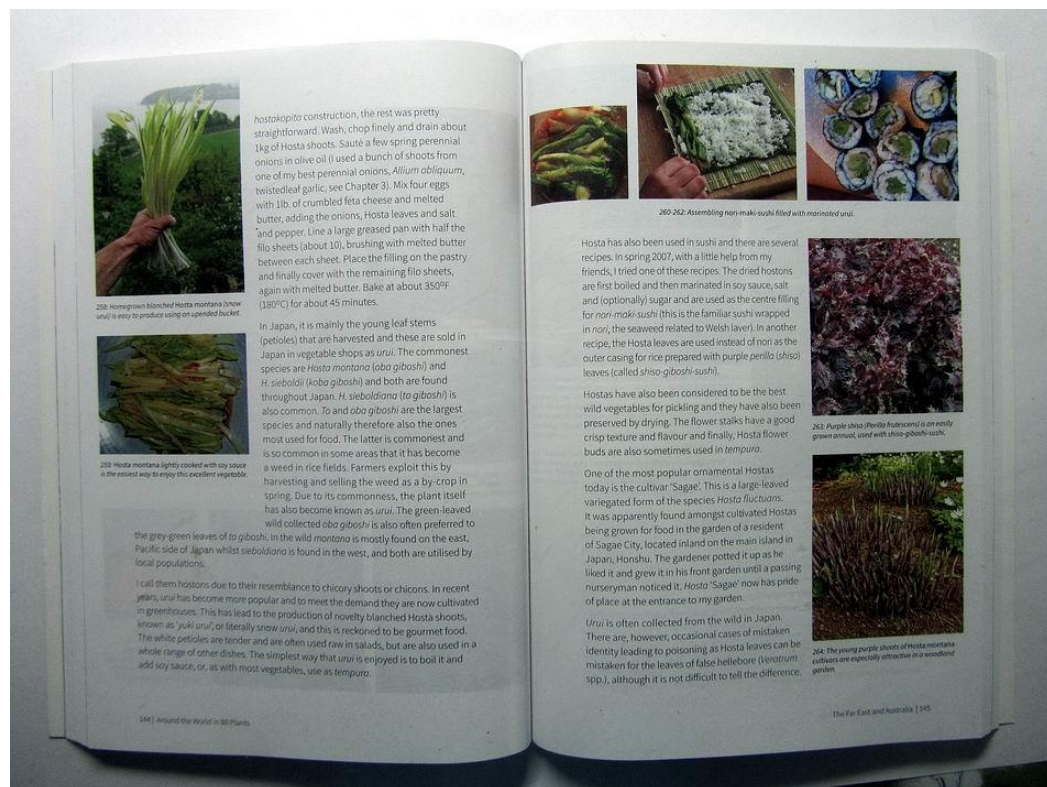
I have received a very interesting book to review and you may indeed wonder what place does a book on edible plants have in the Bulb Log – well you may be surprised to learn just how many of the edibles described are bulbs. Stephen Barstow has been seeking out and learning about edible plants for over thirty years and he has generously provided us with his wealth of knowledge in this wonderful book.

The book is split into geographical areas of the world including Western and Central Europe, The Caucasus to the Himalayas and Siberia, The Americas and of course the authors home Norway and Scandinavia. A number of plants of edible importance are featured from the various countries within these regions.

CONTENTS	
About the Author	v
Contact the Author	vi
Disclaimer	viii
Acknowledgements	ix
Foreword by Alys Fowler	xi
The Purpose of this Book	xiii
1. Western and Central Europe	1
2. Southern Europe and the Mediterranean	57
3. The Caucasus to the Himalayas and Siberia	97
4. The Far East and Australia	127
5. The Americas	175
6. Norway (and Scandinavia)	209
Appendix 1: Plant Table	265
Appendix 2: List of <i>Calzone</i> Ingredients	272
Bibliography and References	273
Index	279



I was not surprised to see Alliums featured but I was surprised to learn just how many of them are used extensively for eating around the world. We all know about and eat regular Onion and Chives but I had not realised, for instance, that Allium cernuum, seen in our gardens as an ornamental, was such a staple part of the Native North American population's diet, nor that Chicago was the local Indian name for onion. The book is full of fascinating such historical facts that can bring so much more appreciation of these plants whether we eat them or just enjoy their decorative qualities.



Being a book about food plants you will not be surprised that it includes details of how you should prepare the various plants and which part(s) you should eat – from the pictures many look and sound delicious. Some are cooked others are eaten raw as salads, the Author is also known as 'Extreme Salad Man' when he prepared a salad containing 538 varieties – a world record. Also included are details of how the plants were and are grown to make them more palatable, using techniques such as blanching stems to reduce the bitter taste that some plants may have - this extends to how they

are grown in modern times by those enlightened to their full value as a food resource. This just the sort of book that I really enjoy for a number of reasons one is that you do not need to read it from the start to the finish, you can flick through and read about whichever of the eighty plants takes your eye - where you will discover that many more than 80 plants are discussed. The size of this paperback book is 24 x 17cms making it easy to hold and read anywhere, and the 284 give it a pleasant weighty feel in the hands – book lovers will understand the feel of a book in your hands is part of the overall pleasure of the printed page!



Taraxacum officinale

Family: Asteraceae
Chinese: 苦苣菜, Common Dandelion
French: Dent de Lion, Laiteron, Pissenlit
German: Löwenzahn, Klabauter, Pflasterkraut
Hebrew: אגורטול
Italian: Tarassaco, Comune
Japanese: センダング
Russian: Одуванчик, Одуванчик, Лепестничник
Spanish: Alhucón, Amargo, Diente de León

I never dreamed that my seed saving activities would lead me for a short period of time to be in control of future homeland security in the US, Canada, Europe and Japan! I'm dreaming? Illusions of grandeur? Well, read on...

You've heard of peak oil, right? Let me introduce you to peak rubber! The price of rubber is being driven through the ceiling through a combination of factors. This includes increasing demand from developing economies increasing oil prices (synthetic rubbers are derived from crude oil). In addition, there is a serious leaf blight disease affecting the rubber tree (*Hevea brasiliensis*). Peak oil would also lead to falling availability of rubber in the world, unless natural sources could be boosted. Added to this, the wish in the US and other countries to be able to produce rubber at home, rather than relying on production in tropical countries where *Hevea* can be cultivated, led to renewed research into a species which previously found favour during World War II when natural rubber supplies from the tropics had dried up. It is none other than the rubber dandelion (*Taraxacum kok-saghyz*), a species that is from a valley in the Tian-Shan Mountains in Kazakhstan. To the untrained eye it could easily be mistaken for the common garden dandelion, important differences being horned bracts on the flower heads and thicker leaves. It was the well-known Russian

botanist and geneticist Nikolai Vavilov who studied 150 different rubber-producing plants in the 1930s and found that *Taraxacum kok-saghyz* was the best and only real candidate for rubber production in temperate climates! This plant is well adapted to areas with cold winters and was apparently cultivated both in Russia and the US during World War II. It can also be grown on land that is unsuitable for other crops.

In the 1990s, research activities increased in response to the worries about future supplies of rubber and the desire for increased homeland security. I had grown rubber dandelion in my garden and it also had a milder taste as a salad plant than the common dandelion. Dandelions produce latex as a protection against insects, gumming up their mouthparts and I had wondered if the higher levels of latex meant that there was less



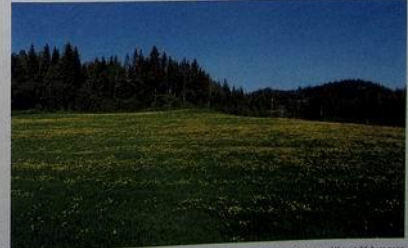
56: *Taraxacum kok-saghyz* or closely related species.

need for the plant to taste bitter. This was one of the species I collected seed from and it found its way to my internet seed-trading list! Soon after this list was posted, I received an enquiry from a German university for seed. I was apparently the only current source for this species that they could find. They told me they would buy as much as I could produce. In the following few years I received similar requests from scientists in the US, Canada and Japan and this has by far been my 'best seller' (I don't normally sell seed, but when you get a good offer it's difficult to refuse); see also Gronover and Prüfer, 2010 for a good review of the subject.

I reckon that pretty well anyone likely to read this account will be familiar with dandelions so I hardly need describe them, although there are admittedly a number of look-alikes such as the hawksbeards (*Crepis* spp.), cat's ears (*Hypochaeris* spp.) and *Hyoseris* spp., but many of these have also been wild-foraged for food. Although native to Europe, Asia and North America, two species, *Taraxacum officinale* and *T. erythrospermum*, have spread as weeds worldwide.

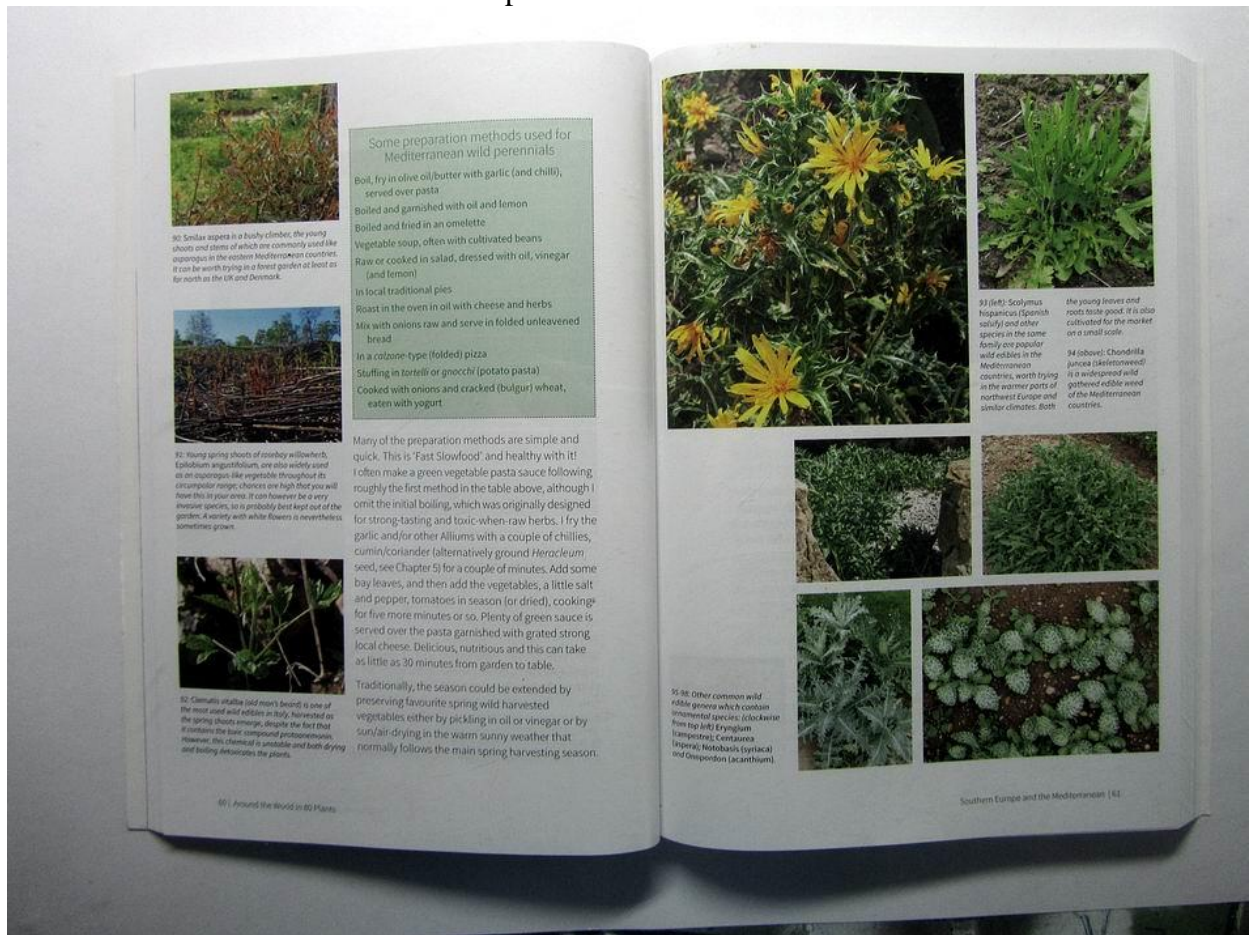


57 & 58: *Hyoseris radiata* (top) and *Crepis leontodontoides* (bottom) are two of many dandelion look-alikes that are also wild-foraged, cooked and eaten raw in salads. (Ethnobotanical Garden at Orto Botanico, Firenze).



58: A photograph of a dandelion field like this could have been taken in many countries around the world, here near my home in Malak, Norway.

Another big positive for me is that any book which devotes eleven pages to the dandelion has to be worth a read and I learned so many new facts about this wonderful plant referring to its decorative, medicinal and edible qualities - for instance I have eaten most parts of the plants before but I never thought of cooking and eating the flower stems as 'dandenoodles' before – the recipe is included.



Some preparation methods used for Mediterranean wild perennials:
 Boil, fry in olive oil/butter with garlic (and chilli), served over pasta
 Boiled and garnished with oil and lemon
 Boiled and fried in an omelette
 Vegetable soup, often with cultivated beans
 Raw or cooked in salad, dressed with oil, vinegar (and lemon)
 In local traditional pies
 Roast in the oven in oil with cheese and herbs
 Mix with onions raw and serve in folded unleavened bread
 In a calzone-type (folded) pizza
 Stuffing in tortelli or gnocchi (potato pasta)
 Cooked with onions and cracked (bulgur) wheat, eaten with yogurt



92: *Smilax aspera* is a bushy climber, the young shoots and stems of which are commonly used as asparagus in the eastern Mediterranean countries. It can be worth trying in a forest garden at least as far north as the UK and Denmark.



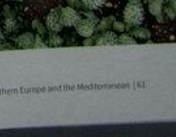
93: Young spring shoots of asparagus willowherb, *Epilobium angustifolium*, are also widely used as an asparagus-like vegetable throughout its circumpolar range; chances are high that you will find this in your area. It can however be very invasive species, so is probably best kept out of the garden. A variety with white flowers is nevertheless sometimes grown.



94: *Camassia allata* (old man's beard) is one of the most used wild edibles in Italy, harvested as the spring shoots emerge, despite the fact that it contains the hair compound protoanemonin. However, this chemical is unstable and both drying and boiling denatures the plants.



93 (left): *Scopolmus hispanicus* (Spanish scallion) and other species in the same family are popular wild edibles in the Mediterranean countries, worth trying in the warmer parts of northwest Europe and similar climates. Both the young leaves and roots taste good. It is also cultivated for the market on a small scale.



95-98: Other common wild edible genera which contain unarmoured species (also known from top left) *Eryngium hispanicum*, *Centauria bipartita*, *Notolabis* (typical) and *Gnaphalium* (Lacanthium).

Extensively illustrated with images showing everything from the plants in wild habitat, to the kitchen garden, and on to the plate make it very visually pleasing as well as informative.



Another of the many things that I have learned from the book is that we can use the flowers spikes of *Ornithogalum pyrenaicum* as a form of asparagus, again cooking instructions including accompanying flavours.

Did you know that you can eat Hostas? I did not but I do now.

This book is full of such surprises with unexpected edibles, which many of us are growing, appearing along with the more familiar ones that most of us still eat in some cultivated form.

The author's enthusiasm, passion and extensive knowledge for this subject come over so effectively in the text that once you start dipping into this book you will find it quite infectious as you too become thirsty to harvest more facts and information on the wonderful world of edible plants.

As well as an extensive Index, Bibliography and References there is a table of the 80 main plants discussed giving habitat season, and an 'Edimental' scale, making it very quick to find the information you may require.

Species	Form	Habitat	Main Harvest	Edimental? (scale 1 to 5)	Forest Garden	Page no.
<i>Allium acrocladon</i>	Perennial	Open woodland to sunny	Leaves: spring Bulbs: autumn Tapet: Bulbs: sprouts: winter	2		215
<i>Allium amezcans</i>	Perennial	Sunny to open woodland	Leaves: spring to summer Leaves: late summer White plant: winter	3		122
<i>Allium triquetrum</i>	Perennial	Open woodland to sunny	Leaves: spring Flowers: late spring Bulbs: autumn	4		90
<i>Allium tuberosum</i>	Perennial	Sunny to open woodland	Leaves: spring Flowers: late summer	4		130
<i>Allium ursinum</i>	Perennial	Open woodland, prefers damp soil	Leaves: spring Flowers: early summer	4	Y	50
<i>Allium rotundum</i>	Perennial	Sunny to open woodland, prefers damp soil	Leaves: spring Flowers: summer	3		179
<i>Allium victorialis</i>	Perennial	Sunny to open woodland, prefers damp soil	Leaves: spring	4	Y	218
<i>Allium wallichii</i>	Perennial	Sunny to open woodland	Leaves: late spring Flowers: late summer	4		119
<i>Allium proflerum</i>	Perennial	Sunny	Leaves: spring Tapet: late summer to autumn Tapet: sprouts: winter	3		255
<i>Asphodeline taurica</i>	Biennial to Perennial	Open woodland to sunny, prefers damp soil	Leaves: shoots: spring Stems: summer Onion: in spring	3		210
<i>Asium nodiflorum</i>	Perennial	Semi-aquatic to damp soils in sunny and shady locations	Leaves: winter and spring Seeds: autumn	2		80
<i>Aspidocostis</i>	Perennial	Open woodland to sunny, but doesn't like dry conditions	Shoots: spring Flower: autumn	4	Y	135

I cannot recommend this book highly enough, even if you do not want to try eating such an extensive array of plants, it is an ideal read for anyone who has any interest in plants, in fact if you were not interested in plants before you read this book you certainly will be before you finish it. It is full of fascinating history of the way our ancestors have used these plants, knowledge that sadly is so often lost in modern times. In fact this is exactly the sort of history we should be taught in school – it is much more useful to learn which plants you can forage or grow to eat complete with what good they can do for us rather than the usual school day history “To memorizing politics of ancient history”. The author gardens in the very far North (64°N) not far from Trondheim where growing conditions can be challenging to say the least so most of us should be able to grow them also.

The book is very reasonably priced at less than £20 and is currently available at a special offer price through the publishers:-

[Around the World in 80 Plants by Stephen Barstow](https://www.stephenbarstow.com/)



Another lesson I learned was regarding *Allium wallichii*, which we have grown for years and now self seeds around the garden, all parts of it are eaten extensively in its himalayan home lands - as it will also now be in our garden.



Allium wallichii



I could not leave you this week without another view of the highlight flower of the week growing in the open garden – Narcissus ‘Cedric Morris’.....