

**Woodland Forage Event  
Alva Ecolodge C.I.C.  
23<sup>rd</sup> September 2012**



*This event is part of the CWA Knowledge and Skill Development Training Programme, funded by the Scottish Government Skills Development Scheme and the Robertson Trust.*

# **Woodland Forage Event**

## **Alva Ecolodge C.I.C.**

### **23<sup>rd</sup> September 2012**

This report focuses on the Woodland Forage Event delivered as part of the CWA Knowledge and Skills Development Scheme 2011/12. This event took place on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2012, training a total of 19 people. This report summarises the event and gives feedback on the success of the project.

#### **Why did we do this?**

The purpose of the events was to provide members of the local community of Alva, and interested persons from the surrounding area the knowledge and techniques required to identify and forage plants, to provide them with ideas and inspiration to cook with their foraged foods. The event also aimed to provide participants with hands on experience of using equipment to press apples for juice supporting the interest in community orchards in the area.

#### **Course Content**

##### ***The aim of the course is:***

On successful completion of the training participants will be able to use the skills gained to identify suitable food to forage within a woodland environment. Participants will gain a greater understanding of the great diversity of resources that woodland can provide in a relatively small area and one which can be easily accessible. Appreciation of importance of their local woodlands will support.

##### ***The objectives of the course are*** - participants will be able to:

1. Identify a variety of species to forage
2. Understand the diversity of plants within woodland.
3. Cook with foraged food.
4. Gain hands on experience of producing a product from woodland produce.

#### **Event trainer: Margaret Lear**

Margaret is a horticulturist whose business Plants with Purpose provides unusual herbs and edible plants. Following a first career as a primary school teacher Margaret's passion for the country and the natural world led her to retrain in horticulture and she has worked in landscaping, nursery production, semi-self-sufficient smallholding, and more frequently now, education. Her nursery stocks over 250 useful, culinary, medicinal, wildlife and edible plants all homegrown using organic principles. In addition along with husband Andrew Lear aka

Appletreeman they run lots of workshops and courses throughout Scotland and the UK, including sustainable gardening, wildfood foraging, 'grow your own', beekeeping and many more.

### **Event trainer: Claire Templeton**

Living locally Claire is a keen forager in Alva Glen and the Ochil Hills. Co-founder of Alva Glen Heritage Trust ([www.alvaglen.org.uk](http://www.alvaglen.org.uk)) in 2003 Claire changed career in 2007 when she left full time employment and studied Countryside Management at Oatridge College for two years – this was followed by a further years study at Edinburgh Napier University to attain a Degree in Ecotourism and the same year became a fellow of the School for Social Entrepreneurs. Founder and director of Alva Ecolodge C.I.C. ([www.alvaecolodge.co.uk](http://www.alvaecolodge.co.uk)), Claire along with fellow directors Steven Kelvin and Sonia Grant provide diverse learning experiences in the community.

### **List of participants**

Claire Templeton	Lesley Bulbeck	Mrs Farmer
Ros Mills	Polly Welsh	David Taylor
Steven Kelvin	Mr Welsh Snr	Diane Turner
Sonia Grant	Mr Welsh Jnr	Katelyn Turner
Margaret Lear	Sandra Cashmore	Iain Snell
Laura Hamlet	Iona Cashmore	
L. Friend	Jennifer Grant	

### **Course content**

10.30 am	Refreshments and welcome at the Masonic building
10.45 am	Introduction and start of guided forage walk in Alva Glen
12.30 am	Lunch and an opportunity for participants and trainers to exchange knowledge and experiences
1.30 pm	Foraged food cookery demonstration.
2.00 pm	Apple pressing session
3.00 pm	Food and drink tasting session
3.30 pm	Finish

### **Guided Forage Walk (Margaret Lear)**

Our walk began at the entrance to Alva Glen with the group congregated round the raised bed. Margaret pointed out several edible plants growing in the bed – chives, nasturtiums (flower and

seed), lavender and thyme. The group were invited to try these edibles – with the reassurance that their location in the raised bed reduced the likelihood of them being soiled by animals. From the raised bed the group moved a short distance to examine a Hazel tree, we found that there were some nuts on the tree, they were not ready to eat.

The group then moved into the glen, stopping along the path to look at some ground elder – a very invasive non-native. Margaret shocking everyone by telling them that she is now selling this plant back to gardeners in Scotland for food - it has a parsley-like flavour and can be used as a leaf or in soups. The group followed the path to the pond area within the glen, here the group explored the value of watermint for brewing as tea, as well as other edibles found round the pond edge.

The walk moved through the lower glen, stopping to discuss various plants and their uses. Such as;

- **Nettles:** used for a variety of foods including soup, tea, wine, porridge and a love potion.
- **Elder:** using berries for wine and flowers for cordial and cakes.
- **Rosehips:** used for syrup. Margaret explained the difference in taste between the smaller rosehips and the larger ones – pointing out that not only do they taste better, the large ones are much easier to forage as you need less of them. Margaret also explained the importance of getting all the fibres out of the syrup (by filtering) as the pips are an irritant.
- **Rowan berries:** can be picked and used to make a jelly – one that Margaret claims is better than cranberry jelly for Christmas dinners.

The walk concluded at an area of the glen that is home to a large number of blackcurrant and raspberry bushes. The raspberries had passed their best, however the blackcurrants were plentiful. The group enjoyed sampling these, and it was revealed that this is the one plant that most of the population in Scotland will forage annually.

### **Foraged food cookery demonstration (Claire Templeton)**

The cookery demonstration featured foraged berries; blackberries, raspberries and hazelnuts which were used as ingredients to make berry muffins. Assisted by two of the younger participants Claire demonstrated the method for combining the ingredients. A description of the method and a list of ingredients were shown on the big screen so participants could take notes if they wished. Claire answered a number of questions from the group and advised that details of recipes would be updated to the Alva Ecolodge website also encouraging the group to share any recipes or tips they might have through the Alva Ecolodge facebook page.

### **Apple pressing session (Margaret Lear)**

Margaret gave advice to the group on the types of apples that could be used and their different tastes. The various pieces of equipment used at the different stages of production and storage were presented and explained along with some science behind the process. After a thorough introduction to the method and equipment everyone got the opportunity to have a shot at

pressing the apples after first cutting them into smaller more manageable pieces. The chopped apples were first put through a crusher before the resulting pulp was then placed in the press. The youngest member of the group was keen to get involved from the start and is pictured below showing how it's done. Turning the arm of the press was surprisingly easy and in no time there was apple juice flowing into the basin. Tasting the freshly prepared apple juice was a new and very enjoyable experience.

### **Foraged food and drink tasting session (Claire Templeton)**

As the group tasted the apple juice Claire introduced a tasting menu which included the previously prepared berry muffins, now cooked. Also available for the group to taste were Nettle Soup, Elderberry Cordial, Blackberry & Yogurt Fairy Cakes, Hazelnut Pate, Rosehip Syrup and Stewed Knotweed. Many of the group had never before tasted some of the ingredients used and many were surprised by how tasty they were. Discussions about the diverse range of produce available to forage locally in woodland areas brought with it the sharing of recipes and experiences foraging between members of the group. Before leaving participants were invited to take away some foraged hazelnuts that Claire had brought with her. She explained that they should be left to dry out and mature for a few weeks before they would be ready to crack open and eat.

### **Photographs**





More photographs can be found on the Alva Eco-lodge Facebook page: -  
<https://www.facebook.com/#!/pages/Alva-Ecolodge-CIC/115836775232138?fref=ts>

**Delegate Feedback (12 forms returned)**

**How did you hear about this event?**

Facebook 2  
 Word of mouth 5  
 CWA Email 2  
 No answer given 3

	V.Good	Good	Fair	Poor	V.Poor
<b>Location</b>	10	1	1		
<b>Organisation</b>	9	2	1		
<b>Catering</b>	9	3			
<b>Facilities</b>	7	4	1		

**Do you feel this event delivered your expectations?**

Yes	11	No		Partly	1
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**Comments from Partly or No:**

Really enjoyed the cookery demo, but there was a lot of time in the afternoon we could have used for some more of the exciting recipes possible.

**Why did you want to take part in this event?**

To see what is on our doorstep  
 To find out about different plants  
 Something different  
 To find out about foraging in the local area  
 I learned lots on the last forage event in the woods and the food and company was amazing  
 Interested  
 To learn more about what is around me  
 Like free stuff! Like learning new things, like food! :)  
 Really loved the event in the spring, keen to learn more about wild food  
 Have been to a forage walk before and enjoyed it, it is an event for the whole family, kids are made very welcome  
 I enjoy learning new things  
 To learn more about foraging, meet like-minded people

**What benefits do you feel you gained by attending this event?**

Learning lots of plants  
 Learned new foods to eat  
 New knowledge  
 Learning about recipes  
 Knowledge, community interaction and good fun  
 Knowledge of what is available close to home

Knowledge

New recipes, good demos

Great to have the opportunity to spend time with people who are passionate and knowledgeable about wild food, share ideas

Always learn something new about foraging. Apple press was interesting and good fun

New ideas

Lots of new knowledge about plants and what can be done with them - nettle love potion!

**What will you do with the skills & experience you have gained in attendance?**

Use them and learn more

Make jam

Make cider :)

Try for myself

Useful for my mountain leader award and general knowledge of local environment

Make cider

Make free food

Make cakes, cordials, tea

Try some of the jelly / cordial recipes out at home

Hopefully get better at foraging and try some new recipes

Experiment

Get busy foraging and eating!

**Would you recommend this event to a friend**

Yes	12
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**Comments (from yes)**

It was very educational

To learn more about the local area and what is around them

A great way to spend an afternoon and learn stuff and meet folk

Great way to spend a Sunday afternoon

Would want to tell them what they are missing

Fun, interesting, good atmosphere

Good for people to be aware of the natural resources with have locally

It's enjoyable

Very educational, interesting and tasty!

**What other training / seminar opportunities would you like to see organised?**

Whatever can be organised - all good!

Higher up the glen or into the hills for plant life and foraging

Longer guided family walks; pointing out interesting plants, features.

Get people familiarised with local paths and confident to get out and about

More on wild food and foraging

**General Comments on this event:**

Thanks so much for sharing with us, and taking the time - really important for community. Great work!

Thanks for a great day

Thanks

It was worthwhile

Great work!