SCOUTS BUSHCRAFT

Foraging and Edible Plants

60-Minute Outdoor Learning Lesson Plan

Audience	Scouts / young people, adapted to age and experience	**Duration**	60 minutes
Setting	Suitable outdoor site with leader-approved boundaries	**Delivery**	Leader-led, small groups

Lesson aim

Introduce Scouts to common British wild plants and the principles of safe, legal and sustainable foraging. The session develops observation and identification skills without requiring anyone to taste or eat wild plants.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session, participants should be able to:

• Describe at least three features used to identify a plant (for example leaf shape, stem, flower, smell where safe, and habitat).

• Explain why a plant must be identified with certainty using several features before it is considered for food.

• Name examples of common edible plants and recognise that poisonous lookalikes exist.

• Give at least three responsible-foraging rules, including permission, avoiding polluted areas and taking only a small amount.

• Explain what to do if a plant is unknown or someone may have eaten a poisonous plant.

Important safety boundary

This is an identification and observation lesson, not a tasting activity. Do not allow Scouts to taste, chew or take home wild plants. Only a suitably competent adult should plan any later food-preparation activity, with separate checks for identification, permissions, hygiene, allergies, safeguarding and the activity risk assessment. Never use taste as an identification test.

Equipment and preparation

Equipment	Preparation before the session
Reliable UK plant field guides or verified identification sheets; plant photo cards; pencils and notebooks; hand lens; clipboard; handwashing water and soap; first-aid kit; gloves for handling nettles only if included.	Check site permission and local restrictions. Walk the area beforehand; identify safe boundaries and hazards. Select a few common plants for observation. Do not collect protected plants or disturb habitats. Prepare clear photos as a no-touch alternative.

60-minute session plan

Time	Activity	Leader actions	Scout participation
0–5 min	**Welcome and safety briefing**	Explain the aim and boundaries. Set the rule: observe only—no tasting, picking or putting plants near the mouth. Explain the stop signal, group boundaries, hand hygiene and what to do if a plant is touched or ingested.	Listen, repeat the key safety rule and stay with their group.
5–15 min	**What is foraging?**	Discuss seasonal wild foods and the difference between recognising a plant and confirming it is safe to eat. Introduce responsible foraging: permission, local rules, clean sites, wildlife needs and leaving plenty behind.	Share examples from the book and suggest responsible choices.
15–30 min	**Plant identification demonstration**	Use verified photographs or leader-checked plants. Model a structured check: whole plant and growth habit; leaves and arrangement; stem; flowers or fruit; habitat; season; and possible lookalikes. Explain that smell alone is not proof.	Use a field guide to record visible features. Do not handle unknown plants.
30–45 min	**Small-group observation challenge**	Give each group two or three photo cards or leader-selected specimens to observe. Ask them to record the plant's features, habitat, season and one reason further checking may be needed. Include at least one poisonous lookalike example.	Complete an observation sheet and explain how they reached their tentative identification.
45–55 min	**Foraging decisions quiz**	Read short scenarios: a plant beside a busy road; an unknown berry; a protected flower; a large patch where only a little is needed; and a plant with a close poisonous lookalike. Ask groups what the safe and responsible action is.	Choose safe actions and explain: leave unknown plants; do not eat; check permission and rules; avoid contamination; protect wildlife.
55–60 min	**Review and close**	Ask each Scout to share one identification feature and one foraging safety rule. Re-state that unknown plants must never be tasted. Check hands are clean before leaving.	Share one learning point and return equipment.

Assessment and evidence of learning

• Observe whether Scouts use more than one feature when suggesting an identification.

• Check completed field notes for leaf, stem, flower/fruit, habitat and season observations.

• Use the final verbal review to confirm that Scouts know not to taste unknown plants.

• Offer support with picture guides, paired work or extra time where needed.

Adaptations and inclusion

Use large, clear photographs or tactile leaf models where appropriate. Keep the activity on accessible paths if needed. Offer paired observation, verbal answers or drawing instead of written notes. Avoid requiring contact with plants; participants can work entirely from photographs. Consider allergies, sensory needs and individual support requirements before the session.

Leader safety checklist

■ Permission, site rules and boundaries checked; suitable adult supervision in place.

■ Area checked for hazards, contamination, stinging plants, thorns, animal fouling and traffic.

■ No tasting, chewing, collecting or taking wild plants away during this session.

■ No handling of unknown plants; use photos or leader-selected specimens.

■ Handwashing available; first-aid arrangements and emergency contact procedure confirmed.

■ If ingestion is suspected, seek urgent medical advice. Do not induce vomiting. Call 999 for severe symptoms.

Useful closing message

Identify carefully. Ask permission. Take nothing unnecessarily. Never taste an unknown plant. Leave the habitat healthy for wildlife and other people.

This lesson plan is a planning aid. The leader must adapt it to the participants, site, current local rules and the organisation's current safety and safeguarding procedures.