**Ramps/Wild Leeks**

*Allium tricoccum*

Perennial from strongly rooted bulb just beneath soil surface. Seeds disperse; bulbs form horizontal offsets, rooting laterally slowly forming thick attractive colonies. An early spring vegetable. A member of the onion family, with strong garlic-like odor and a pronounced sweet onion/leek flavor.

CT native, found in rich moist well-drained uplands, floodplain woods. Presence of ramps signals that original woodland flora is still in intact. Often found with bloodroot, blue cohosh, mayapple, trillium.

Pairs of 4-9” x 1.5 - 3.5” glossy smooth-edged elliptical leaves, on short purple or burgundy scallion-like stems. Emerges in early spring.

Leaves wither away in early summer. At the same time, on 2-3+ year old plants, 6-10” reddish/pale-green stalks grow, topped with a round 1-2” translucent creamy-white flower cluster, June-July, for about 2 weeks. Shiny hard black seed-fruit matures in fall, often standing through winter.

**Planting Sites:** The more similar to native growing conditions, the better.

- Well-drained, loose loam, moist, cool soil. Use fresh cover of deciduous leaves as mulch each fall. Part shade to shade, likes dappled sunlight during spring, and enough shade in the summer to keep the soil moist. Irrigate if necessary during dry spells, but not to the point of saturation. Some references recommend high calcium and magnesium levels.
- Or, use 6”-high raised beds, amend soil with 2-3” rotted leaves/compost.

**General Goal:** Balance out between harvesting and establishing colony.

**Harvesting:** A 10% harvest once every ten years is the maximum sustainable. Harvesting before patch is enlarged quickly depletes the patch. Don’t harvest plants from bulbs for at least 2 years, or from seeds, for 3-5 years. Consider sustaining patch by using leaves and stems, not bulbs. Many say bulbs are far less tasty than leaves. Pinch or snip leaves just above soil line. If bulbs harvested, leave behind the base of the bulb (with the attached roots). Consider separated areas of planting, alternate harvest of each area to every few years, leaving other areas to regenerate.

**Propagation: Seeds** - Collect seed September/October, once they’re black. Scratch/loosen top layer of soil. Space 4-6” apart, pressing into soil with palm of hand. Cover with damp shredded leaves. Germination may take 2 years. Consider covering bed with rabbit wire screen to prevent squirrels damage.

**Propagation: Dividing/Transplanting** - If patch is congested after a few years, dig some up and transplant to a new spot. Gently, avoiding bulb damage, dig bulbs/plants out of ground with garden fork, after spring thaw, or in fall. Push fork into ground about 2 inches from base of plants, carefully lever them up. Remove some bulbs, leave others intact. Replant divided roots, remaining bulbs, small bulblets, about 2-3” deep. Water well, mulch with leaves.


**Eating:** Considered one of the tastiest wild edibles in New England.

- Use the mildly flavored leaves in salads and soups. Cooking the leaves sweetens them, yields texture like lightly cooked spinach. Serve as side dish sauteed with butter, garlic, and lemon zest.
- Fry with potatoes, or scramble with eggs and bacon. Dunk in batter and deep-fry them. Use as a topping for fish. Bulbs: used raw, boiled, pickled. Strong taste reduced by parboiling/discard ing water. Or roast/grill them whole - bulbs become tender, the leaves crispy. (Ramps can be safely eaten in small amounts. In large quantities, can induce nausea/vomiting/diarrhea).

**Ornamental Uses:** Both foliage and flowers are attractive, and an excellent spring ground cover. Flowers brighten the dark corners of the woods.

**Culture:** Strong associations with folklore of Native Americans, Appalachians, April Ramp Festivals. Historically used as tonic, since vitamin/mineral content bolstered the health after absence of green vegetables during winter.

**Attracts Halictid bees, Masked bees, Honeybees, Bumblebees, Mason bees.**