



Celebrating the free food at Kett's Heights



Friends of
Kett's Heights

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Foraging guidelines

- Wherever you forage, do make sure you have permission. You're welcome to forage here at Kett's Heights but some sites are too fragile to allow it.
- Know what you're picking. Always check with a field guide if you're not sure – better safe than sorry!
- Pick carefully, so that you don't damage plants or damage the site.
- Leave plenty for others, especially wildlife. They depend on wild food for their survival.

Introduction

Welcome to Kett's Heights and the free food you'll find here.

This booklet is a companion to our food trail leaflet *Food on Kett's Heights*, which you'll find on our website at kettshheights.co.uk.

In these pages we describe the food growing here, what it looks like and where to find it (there's a location map on the centre pages to help you).

We hope you will enjoy discovering Kett's harvest for yourselves. Robert Kett would have known many of the good things growing here, though some of the fruit varieties would have been new to him.

As you walk around Kett's Heights looking for food, you'll be following in the footsteps of medieval monks, who would have grown their herbs nearby. If you forage for wild greens, you'll be keeping up an ancient tradition of ordinary people everywhere, especially in the springtime. And when you gather our fruit and nuts, you'll be sharing the same harvest that local people in Norfolk have gathered for generations.

We hope our free harvest will inspire you to try new food, and perhaps to look out for wild food in other places too – maybe even grow your own, to feed the wildlife as well as your own household.

If you have enjoyed your share of Kett's harvest, do let us know via our website.

With best wishes from the Friends of Kett's Heights.



Herbs

We grow dozens of different herbs here at Kett's Heights. They provide flavour and fragrance for us all year round, and they are also an important source of food for pollinating insects.

Harvest: *all year, depending on the type of herb (some are spring/summer only)*

Where to find them: *herb garden next to chapel wall*

People have cultivated herbs since ancient times. They are valuable in the kitchen and useful as medicines too. The monks who lived near Kett's Heights in the Middle Ages would have grown a wide range of herbs, perhaps close to the sunny spot that we have chosen for our modern herb garden.



Herbs flourish in warm dry sunshine, so our herbs are most plentiful in summer. The herbs pictured in the basket were all picked near this site on a sunny July afternoon.

Hardy types of herbs that grow all year (such as rosemary and thyme) are intensely aromatic, whereas spring/summer herbs (such as chives) tend to be more delicate. To release different herbs' fragrance, try rubbing their leaves between your fingertips. You might be surprised by their strong aroma. This is because they are grown outdoors in conditions that help them to flourish.

We don't have room in this booklet to describe all our herbs, so here's a description of some of our favourites.

Chives look like grass, with pretty purple flowers that are edible. They taste similar to a very mild onion, and are delicious in salads, or you could try them in an omelette aux fines herbes.

Fennel grows into a tall plant, like a giant cow-parsley. The delicate frond-like leaves taste of aniseed, and are good with fish. The seeds are intensely aromatic when crushed.

Rosemary grows into a bush with spiky leaves, and this useful herb has a powerful flavour. Add a sprig of rosemary when roasting potatoes or butternut squash.



Sage has tough downy leaves, either purple or green. It has a slightly musty flavour that particularly complements rich meats and beans.



Wild greens grow everywhere on Kett's Heights. They come in many shapes and sizes, and they are at their best in spring and early summer, before their leaves become tough.

Harvest: *spring-early summer*

Where to find them: *across the whole of Kett's Heights*

Gardeners will recognise many of our wild greens as edible weeds nowadays, but in the past they were a welcome springtime change from store-cupboard winter food – and they were free! A spring tradition still exists in places such as rural Italy and Spain for local people to gather basketfuls of wild greens, and here in the UK there is a revival of interest in foraging for them. Greens are often packed with valuable nutrients. While unfortunately many of them taste rather dull on their own, they can be really delicious when added as ingredients alongside other vegetables.

Everyone will know how to identify *dandelions* (good in a mixed green salad) and *stinging nettles* (tasty in a spring vegetable soup), but most of us will need a reliable field guide to help us find other wild greens that are worth trying.

Some wild greens indicate a sure sign of former human habitation, such as *fat hen* and *Good King Henry*. The monks living near Kett's Heights would have grown both of these as a 'pot-herb' to add to their dishes of beans and root vegetables. Both greens can be cooked and eaten in the same way as spinach.



Caution: Check with a field guide if you're not sure what plant you're picking, in case it isn't suitable to eat. On Kett's Heights, we don't use sprays or weedkillers, but we recommend that you always wash your greens thoroughly before you eat them or cook with them.

Where to find the food

Herbs

Where: herb garden.

What: parsley, rosemary, mint, borage, fennel, thyme, sage and many more.



Greens

Where: all around Kett's Heights

What: alexanders, dandelions, stinging nettles, fat hen, Good King Henry



Apples

Where: around Lower Green and Upper Green

What: At least 12 different varieties



Pears

Where: around Lower Green and Upper Green

What: Hacon's Incomparable



Cherries

Where: around Upper Green

What: Colney, Hertford, Merchant, Summer Sun



Plums

Where: around Upper Green

What: Blue Rock, Coe's Golden Drop, Czar, Green Gage



Wild fruit

Where: all around Kett's Heights

What: blackberries, elderberries, hawthorn berries, rosehips and wild raspberries



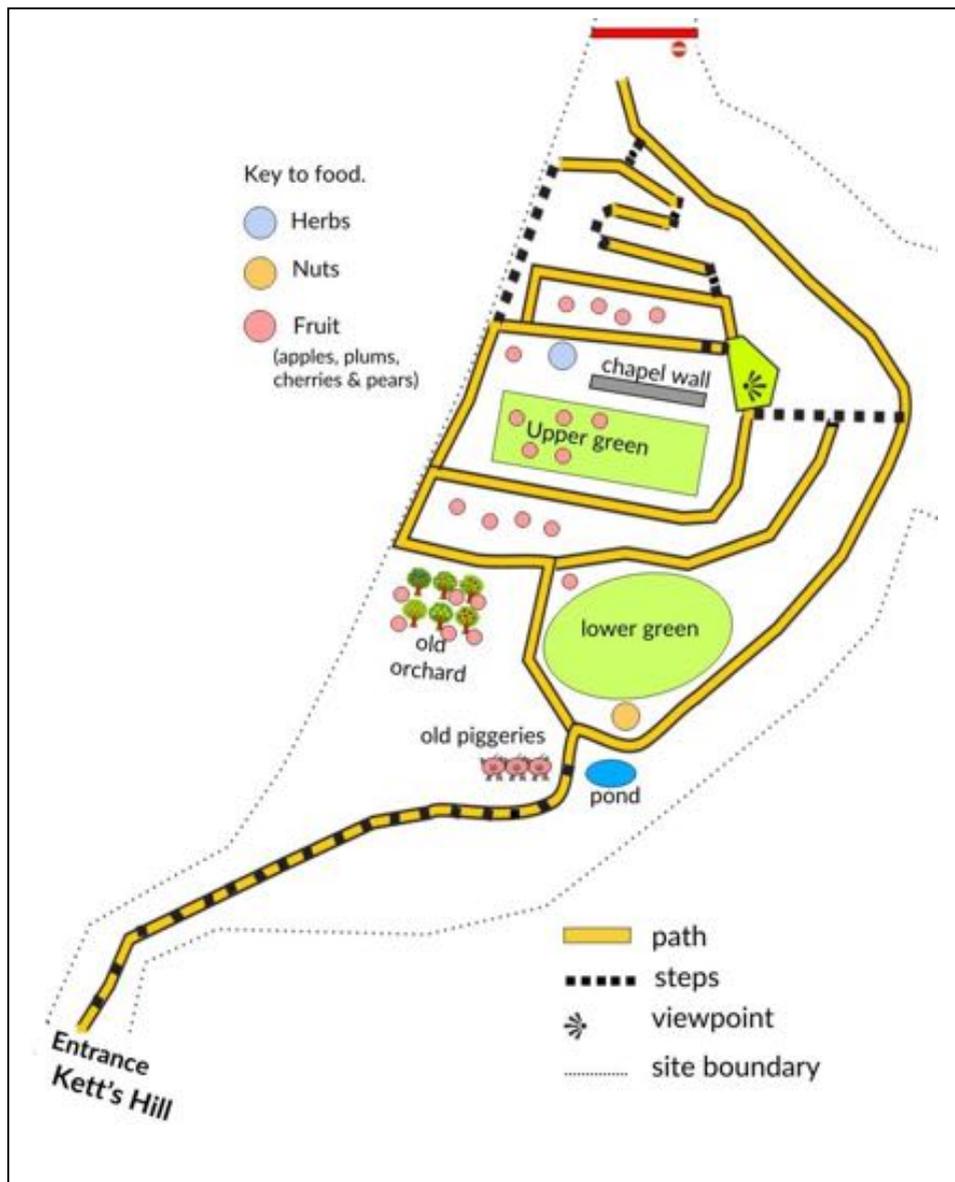
Nuts

Where: Lower Green and elsewhere

What: walnuts, hazelnuts, acorns.



Where to find the food



Apples and pears

The apple and pear trees that we've planted at Kett's Heights are heritage varieties local to Norfolk, each with their own unique character and taste. There are also some older apple trees.

Harvest: September-October

Where to find them: around Lower Green and Upper Green

We have at least a dozen different types of apple, all local. Until modern times there were hundreds of varieties of apples and pears in England, with each region having its particular favourites. Supermarkets prefer to stock a small range of modern fruit that looks and tastes similar, so the old varieties were almost lost.



Fortunately, organisations such as the East of England Apples and Orchards Project are helping to keep these wonderful heritage varieties alive. They supplied the apple and pear trees for our Kett's Heights orchard.

Apples

Most of the thirteen apple varieties we've chosen are Victorian or more recent introductions, while

some are hundreds of years old, including the famous *Norfolk Biffin*. They have wonderful names such as *Norfolk Dumpling* (a 'cooker') and *Five-Crowned Pippin* (an 'eater').

RECIPE

Apple dumpling

You can use either 'cookers' or 'eaters'. For four people, you'll need one apple each (cored and peeled) per person and 320g shortcrust pastry. Fill each apple cavity with a teaspoonful of jam, plus a pat of butter. Divide the pastry into four squares, place each apple in the centre of a square and bring the points to the top to make a little parcel with a hole at the top. Brush with milk or beaten egg. Bake in an ovenproof dish at 200°C, gas mark 6, for about 30 minutes. Serve warm



Pears

Pears are difficult to grow in Norfolk (they don't like our cold east winds), so there are fewer varieties to choose from. We have *Hacon's Incomparable*, dating back to 1792, from Downham Market. This is a sweet-flavoured dessert pear, mid-green and medium-sized, which is ready in October and will store until Christmas.

More fruit

Along with the apple and pear trees, we've planted heritage cherries and plums. If you look carefully, you'll also find wild fruit: blackberries, elderberries and raspberries.

Harvest: July-October

Where to find them: cherries and plums around the Lower Green and Upper Green, wild fruit at various locations around Kett's Heights

Cherries and plums



Traditionally, orchards were planned to provide fresh fruit over a long growing season, further extending that season with jams and other preserves. At Kett's Heights, our fruit season begins with **cherries**. We have four varieties, ripening one after the other from June through to August. They are all delicious dessert cherries, perfect for eating straight from the tree, and very popular with birds too!

Three of our four types of **plum** are the gage type, small, round and sweet, and bred for their intense flavour. Most people will know the *Green Gage*, which crops in mid-August, but may never have seen *Blue Rock*, a deep blue plum from Hertfordshire. Last to crop, in late September, is the plum that many people think is the best of all: the yellow *Coe's Golden Drop*, first bred in Bury St Edmunds in 1780. All of these plums taste so good when eaten fresh (preferably still warm from the tree) that it would almost be a shame to cook with them.



Wild fruit



There is a range of fruit growing wild as hedgerow plants, and we encourage them to flourish. They are a valuable source of food for wildlife, as well as for us. Some of these plants may not seem familiar – although everyone will recognise blackberries – so do check with a good foraging guide if you're not sure of what you're picking.

In various places around the site, you should be able to find **blackberries**, **elderberries**, **hawthorn berries**, **rosehips** – and, if you're very lucky, **wild raspberries**. Some of these fruits are too sour to eat fresh but they can make superb preserves.

RECIPE

Bramble jelly: Simmer 1kg of blackberries (washed) with 500g of apples (peeled and chopped but not cored) with 125ml of water for 30 minutes, until soft. Strain through a jellybag for several hours, then measure the liquid. For every 600ml, add 450g preserving sugar and the juice of a lemon. Warm gently in a preserving pan (or a low-sided wide saucepan) to dissolve the sugar, then fast-boil for eight minutes. Test for set, then pot and seal in warm jam-jars. Makes about 1.5kg.



Nuts

Nuts have always been a valuable source of protein for the winter larder – and not just for us people, but for animals and birds too. Around Kett’s Heights you’ll find walnuts, hazelnuts and acorns.

Harvest: *October-November*

Where to find them: *walnuts on the Lower Green; acorns and hazelnuts at various locations across Kett’s Heights*

Walnuts

Our magnificent old walnut tree on the Lower Green often produces an abundance of walnuts, but the squirrels love them and rarely leave any for us to enjoy. Look out for smooth green oval shapes in the branches, about the size of a bantam’s egg. These are the walnuts, concealed inside their fleshy husks. Warning: Be careful when handling the husks, as they produce an indelible brown liquid that will stain your hands. The nuts are delicious eaten fresh, often sold as ‘wet walnuts’ in October. If stored for a few weeks, they can be used in many ways, from in salads to pilafs and breads.



Hazelnuts

Hazelnuts also grow in husks, but these are papery and don’t stain your hands. They, too, are delicious eaten fresh as ‘wet’ nuts in October. They are especially good in sweet cakes and puddings, or when eaten with chocolate.

Acorns

In the past, these nuts would have been appreciated, especially in times of hardship when food was scarce, such as during World War II. Nowadays, we leave them for the squirrels.

Further information

About the Friends of Kett's Heights

The Friends of Kett's Heights is a voluntary group that manages Kett's Heights, working in partnership with Norwich City Council (the owner of the site) and Norwich Fringe Project.

Our aims are to make Kett's Heights:

- a welcoming space for the local community and visitors to Norwich
- an attractive space with a wide diversity of plants and wildlife
- an event space with activities to suit a wide audience
- an educational space where its long and diverse history can be investigated and interpreted.

To find out more about the Friends of Kett's Heights, visit our website:

kettshheights.co.uk

Further reading

Richard Mabey's *Food for Free* is the classic guide to identifying and eating wild food.

Jane Grigson's Fruit Book contains recipes for all the cultivated fruit you'll find at Kett's Heights.

Jekka's Complete Herb Book by Jekka McVicar explains how to make good use of a wide range of herbs.

The *River Cottage Handbooks* are practical guides, and the following volumes are especially relevant: *Fruit*, *Hedgerow*, *Herbs*, *Preserves*.

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