

Foraging for your Bunnies and Guinea Pigs Handout 1.0

(brought to you in partnership by The EstherBunny & The Bunny Bach)

'Forage' - unaffectionately also termed 'weeds' or 'w33ds' (in the bunny/piggy world), can be tricky to identify at times, and often our foraging spots are hit and miss. This is because;

- species are seasonal
- the environmental conditions change (wetter / drier / more shaded / sunnier)
- sprayed with herbicide or other chemicals!

This handout can be used to assist you with how to identify some of the common forage plant species in Aotearoa.

Your own garden, or the garden of friends and family is always the best option when it comes to ensuring non-sprayed forage. If you are going to forage in more public areas, such as overgrown grass verges, be mindful of specimens along path edges / fence lines or public / private assets, as there

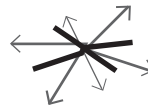
is a higher chance they could have been sprayed.

Often the middle of the verge or garden etc. are safer. Please always be 100% sure that the forage is safe, correctly identified and not sprayed, as ingestion can be harmful to your pet.

If in doubt of species identification, seek a second opinion or don't feed. Seek rabbit or guinea pig veterinarian advice if your pet is on a special diet or medication.

Growth habit forms reference:

Crown/rosette:



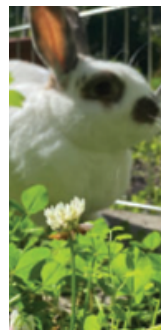
Creeping:



Main stem:



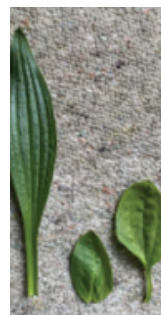
Common Name: Dandelion
Name:
 Looks like: leaves are smooth and toothed, yellow flower and grows from a central spot
 Season: perennial (all year round), flowers in warmer months
 Feed: moderately (a few leaves - a couple of times a week).



Common Name: Clover
 Looks like: three round leaves joined by a central point, creeping habit. White flower.
 Season: perennial
 Feed: feed moderately, high calcium source (check with your vet if ok for diet). Red clover ok to feed too.
 NB: red clover is ok too.



Common Name: Narrow leaved plantain
 Looks like: narrow leaves, veins the full length. Grows in rosette habit.
 Season: perennial (all year). Grows seed heads on long stalks in summer
 Feed: readily. Plantain can be fed daily, great for the digestive tract.



Common Name: Broad leaved plantain
 Looks like: rounded / oval leaves, leathery texture (like narrow leaved variety). Grows from a rosette
 Season: perennial
 Feed: readily. Plantain can be fed daily, great for the digestive tract.



Common Name: Herb Robert
Name:
 Looks like: red stems that radiate from clusters. Has a distinct musty smell. Leaves are fern like.
 Season: annual / biennial
 Feed: moderately. (Has antibacterial and antioxidant properties that can boost immunity when unwell).



Common Name: Puha
 Looks like: grows from a rosette when young / main stem when matured. Has a milky sap from stems
 Season: annual (typically seen more in the wetter / cooler months). Feed: readily.
 (NB: often confused with Mustard Weed - no feed)

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Common Name: Red clover
Looks like: Three oval leaflets resembling common clover but are more elongated. Pink-purple flower heads. It's a creeping legume often forming low mats that spread through grassed areas.
Season: Grows year round but more abundant through late winter and spring.
Feed: Occasionally, red clover is a legume species.



Common Name: Lotus
Looks like: Scrambling herb that creeps through grass and other vegetation in patches. Leaves are five-lobed. Flowers are clusters of yellow pea-like. Plant spreads low and forming loose mats as it grows in pasture, wet banks and stream edges.
Season: Year round.
Feed: Occasionally, lotus is a legume species. Refer notes*



Common Name: Nasturtium
Looks like: Creeping or trailing annual with smooth, succulent stems that can climb to about 2m. Large round, shield-shaped leaves (18–21 cm across). Flower are bright and aromatic ranging from yellow to orange to deep red.
Season: Year round with flowers occurring Oct-May.
Feed: Whole plant is safe. Moderate feeding.



Common Name: Cleavers
Looks like: Cleavers have velcro-like stems and leaves cling to clothing and skin. They sprawl and creep through shaded, damp spots, using nearby plants as ladders as they climb. Patches of the plant can sprawl near 2m.
Season: Annual herb more common in winter.
Feed: Readily.



Common Name: Violet
Looks like: Violet leaves, flowers, and stems are all safe for to eat. They grow in upright habit. Violets are in gardens and lawns, and their flowers look similar to pansies, which are also safe.
Season: Violets are annuals (short lived and seasonal).
Feed: Readily.
 (Note: do not confuse with African violets, the furry indoor plants that are toxic).



Name: Wild strawberry
Looks like: Leaves are identical to that of the common strawberry plant, but thinner. The fruit, also edible, is round and smaller than a common strawberry. Plant creeps with runners.
Season: More abundant in summer.
Feed: Moderate feeding. Contains oxalic acid which can be toxic in large amounts.

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Growth habit forms reference:

Crown/rosette:



Creeping:



Main stem:



***Note on Legume species.** Like alfalfa hay, clover and lotus are legume plants. They have high amount of protein and can cause digestive upset, gas or weight gain in high amounts. Keep to occasional if in doubt or have diet restrictions on legumes.