

Allium Tricoccum

RAMPS

An Appalachian Delicacy

Ramps; the Wild Leek

Ramps or wild leeks are native to eastern North America. In early spring, ramps appear as smooth, broad, “lily-of-the-valley” like leaves that disappear by summer before their white flowers appear. Ramp bulbs are prized for their spring onion taste and strong, garlic-like aroma.



As a result of intensive harvesting for festivals and the increasing interest of high-end restaurants for serving ramps in season; Wild populations of ramps are being seriously damaged. There is an increasing demand for growers to consider this early spring time vegetable as a profitable marketable crop.



Site Selection

Select a site with the following conditions:

- Rich, moist soil—watch for the places that snow melts last.
- Well drained areas that don’t allow water to stand or puddle.
- Shady sites; under the forest canopy of deciduous trees such as beech, birch, sugar maple, poplar, hickory or oak.
- Look for companion plants such as trillium, toothwort, nettle, black cohosh, ginseng, bloodroot, trout lily, bellwort, and mayapple.

Sources of Information & Propagation Material:

- www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-133.html
- www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/ncnu02/v5-449.html
- *Having Your Ramps and Eating Them Too*, by Glen Facemire, Jr.

Trout Lily



Bloodroot



Red Trillium



White Trillium





Planting Ramp Seed

The ideal time to plant ramp seeds is late August or September but they can be planted in the spring like onions. Due to the nature of ramps, it may take 6 to 18 months for seeds to germinate. Production from sowing seeds to root harvest can take 5 to 7 years.

- To plant seeds, rake back leaves on the forest floor, removing any unwanted weeds, tree sprouts, or roots.
- If the soil is not naturally high in organic matter, incorporate organic materials such as composted leaves and other decaying plant material from the forest.
- Loosen the soil and rake to prepare a fine seed bed.
- Sow seeds thinly— a pinch of 10-12 seeds in an area the size of your hand, directly on top of the loose soil and press them gently into the ground.
- Cover seeds with several inches of leaves to retain moisture in the soil and to protect the seeds from wildlife.

Planting Bulbs

- Ramp bulbs can be planted in late February thru March in our region.
- They can also be planted in the fall after they become dormant and flowering is completed.
- Planting bulbs at the proper depth is important for survival -
- Bulbs are planted 3 inches deep and 3-4 inches apart
- Make sure that all roots are buried and just the tip of the new shoots are emerged.
- Mulch the planting bed with 2 to 3 inches of leaf litter. This will help regulate moisture and decrease weed pressure.
- Transplanting bulbs can result in harvestable ramps in 2-3 years.



HARVESTING

In native populations, ramps usually form extensive colonies or clumps. Often the bulbs are so densely spaced that other vegetation can hardly penetrate the stands. Methods for harvest include digging the whole patch, harvesting a portion of a patch, or thinning out and harvesting just the largest plants. Do not harvest plants until they have filled the site, have large bulbs, and have flowered. To have continuous harvest year after year, harvest only one-fifth or one-seventh of your production area each year.

