

Forest Farming Quick Guide

Ramps (*Allium tricoccum*)

Ramps are a species of forest herb that are highly sought after for their delicious flavor, which is reminiscent of garlic and onions. The flavorful leaves and bulbs are harvested from March through May, with plants reaching peak flavor and tenderness in mid-April. Ramp populations are sensitive to overharvesting, with plants not becoming reproductively mature until after 7 years of growth. Due to extensive wild harvesting, compounded by a lack of cultivation and stewardship, ramps have become threatened throughout much of their native range, creating the need and demand for sustainably produced and forest farmed materials.

Site Selection:

- North and east facing hillsides with moderate slopes.
- Rich, moist, well-drained soils that are high in organic matter, with a pH between 5 and 7.
- 50-80 percent shade under mature canopy of sugar maple, tulip poplar, basswood, birch, beech, buckeye, sycamore, and elm.
- Look for companion plants such as trillium, bloodroot, spring beauty, blue cohosh, fern species, and ginseng.

Site Preparation and Maintenance:

- Remove large sticks and debris that will interfere with planting.
- Selectively prune small understory trees and shrubs to improve air flow and reduce competition as needed.
- Manually remove any invasive species from the site.
- Regularly inspect plantings for signs of disease, mortality, browsing, etc.
- Repeat weeding and pruning as needed.

Planting:

- Plant seeds in the fall by raking back leaf litter and expose soil, creating a 4-5 foot wide bed horizontal across the slope.
- Scuff the top ¼ inch of soil with rake, and broadcast 10-12 seeds/square foot.
- Move uphill, rake leaves another 4-5 feet wide, downhill to cover the previously seeded bed.
- Plant bulbs in early March by digging holes approximately 3 inches deep and planting the bulb with tip just above soil surface. Compact soil and recover with leaf litter.

Sustainable Harvesting:

- Harvest leaves only by removing either one leaf from two-leaf plants, or two leaves from three-leaf plants, ensuring that plants will regrow the following season.
- Harvest all of the leaf material and part of the bulb using the “snap method” inserting a knife just below the surface of the soil, cutting the stalk, and leaving the majority of the bulb and entire root system intact to regrow the following year.
- Harvest no more than 10 percent of a population in a single year.



APPALACHIAN BEGINNING
FOREST FARMER COALITION



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

