

**ALLIUM TRICOCCUM** is the plant we call a ramp, also known as a wild leek, wild onion, or garlic of the woods in French-Canadian [*“ail des bois”*].

As the season’s first greens, ramps are sought-after and celebrated for their potent flavor and ephemeral nature. Once considered a tonic after the end of a long winter without fresh vegetables, the emergence of ramps heralds the start of the growing season.

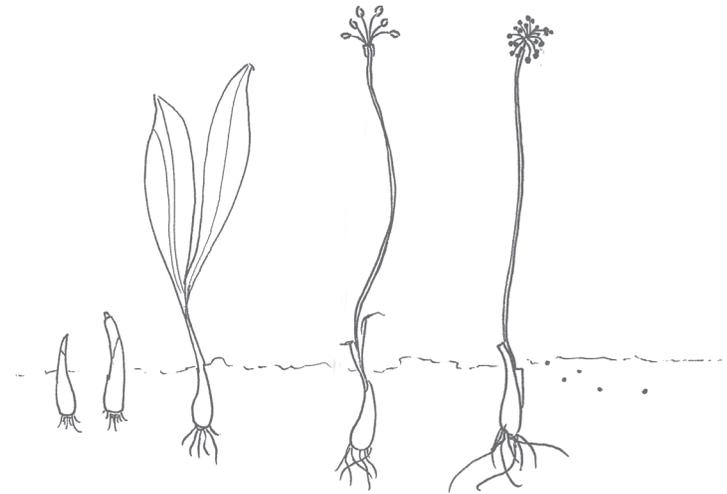
Ramps grow in moist, forested areas throughout the eastern United States and Canada. It takes several years for a ramp to fully mature!

Ramps are a beloved part of our regional flora and cuisine. Foraging wild edibles connects us to our local landscape and, in parts of the Hudson Valley, ramps still grow abundantly. In other regions, ramp patches have been depleted by over-harvesting. They are protected in Quebec, banned from harvesting in Great Smoky Mountain National Park [Tennessee and North Carolina], and given “special concern” status in Maine, Rhode Island and Tennessee.

While we are lucky to still enjoy a bounty of ramps in this region, anecdotal observations suggest that the number of wild ramps has begun to diminish here. So, as we celebrate the ramp and all it represents, it’s time to start thinking about ensuring the long-term enjoyment of ramps.

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**GLYNWOOD’S MISSION** is to ensure that farming thrives in the Hudson Valley. As a sponsor of Ramp Fest 2015 at Basilica Hudson, we are celebrating the culinary pleasures of ramps while reiterating the importance of harvesting sustainably to prolong their bounty in the wild.



### LIFE CYCLE OF A RAMP:

- In the springtime, ramp leaves emerge from a bulb in the soil.
- Over the next few years the ramp will grow in spring, then die back in summer and return to dormancy during winter.
- When a ramp reaches maturity, the leaves die back in summer and the plant sends up a shoot with a cluster of small white flowers, producing small green pods that open to reveal shiny black seeds.
- The seeds drop to the ground, destined to become new ramps...
- But not so quickly! These seeds can take over a year to germinate: they require cold after a warm spell to come out of dormancy [so it can take a winter, then summer, and another winter to “wake” them].
- Once these plants begin to grow from seed, it takes *five to seven years* for the plant to reach maturity and produce its own seeds.
- As they grow toward maturity, ramp bulbs can also multiply [like garlic!].

## Even low levels of harvesting can have lasting effects on ramp population, which calls for a change in how we harvest and consume ramps.

### **HARVEST WILD RAMPS SUSTAINABLY:**

The digging of whole ramps reduces ramp population and prevents reproduction. A seven-year study by the University of Tennessee concluded that a sustainable rate of harvest when digging whole ramp plants from a given patch is only 10% *once every 10 years*. We advise against digging ramps with their bulbs until we have more definitive research to support sustainable foraging.

Fortunately, it is not necessary to use the entire plant to enjoy it. Several botanists and wild food enthusiasts suggest harvesting only the ramp's leaves, with some recommending taking only one of the two leaves per plant — leaving the rest of the plant to photosynthesize.

### **PURCHASE SUSTAINABLY HARVESTED RAMPS:**

If you buy ramps, ask your vendor to consider changing their practices to those described above, with the understanding that we will need to fairly compensate responsible harvesters for maintaining the growth of ramps in our region. Avoid ordering or eating dishes at restaurants that include ramp bulbs.

### **GROW YOUR OWN RAMPS!**

We can continue to enjoy ramps while allowing them to proliferate in the wild: they can be cultivated, either by growing plants from seed or by transplanting bulbs. The following nurseries will ship transplantable ramps propagated from seed:

#### **AMANDA'S GARDEN**

Springwater, NY  
585.669.2275  
[amandagarden.com](http://amandagarden.com)

#### **AMERICAN NATIVE NURSERY**

Quakertown, PA  
855.752.6862  
[americannativenursery.com](http://americannativenursery.com)

For more information, Project Native and Edible Berkshires, two organizations based in Western Massachusetts, provide extensive information on foraging ramps sustainably.