



## WILD GINGER

Meet Nonnie! She is a grandmother who believes that knowledge should be shared between generations. She will personally introduce you to the excitement of plant life and invite you to study with her in our Jr. Herbalist Course.

Enjoy the letter from Nonnie about Wild Ginger!

Dear Young Herbivores,

Deep in the shady forest grows an unusual, wild plant which has dark green leaves shaped like a heart. If you are hiking in the forest, you might see the leaves spread out to form a ground cover and if you brush against them, you will notice a fragrance that smells just like ginger. This plant is called Wild Ginger and its Latin name is *Asarum caudatum*. I think of it as the Wild Ginger of the West because it is found in the old growth cedar forests on the west coast of North America from British Columbia south through similar habitats in Washington, Oregon, northern California and parts of Idaho.

There is a similar species of Wild Ginger called *Asarum canadense* which grows in the deciduous forests on the east coast. Many Indian tribes who lived there cooked the root with their food and also made a tea from it.

Wild Ginger smells and tastes the same as commercially grown ginger root (*Zingiber officinale*) which is bought in the grocery store, sometimes as a root in the vegetable section and sometimes as a powder on the spice shelf. You know the taste of ginger if you have ever eaten gingerbread or ginger cookies.



However, unless you look closely, you could miss seeing the flowers because they are hidden underneath the leaves. These purplish brown flowers grow close to the ground on short stems, and bloom between May and July. They are different from other flowers because they have no petals. Would you like to see this strange looking flower?

Mr. Karl Urban was a botanist for the Umatilla National Forest in Oregon. He drew many wildflowers and put them on coloring pages and posted them on a website so that you could learn about them and enjoy them, even if you are not able to explore the forest. Mr. Urban has said that you can download his pictures and color them, so visit [www.nps.gov/plants/color/northwest](http://www.nps.gov/plants/color/northwest) and have fun!

Herbally yours,

Nonnie

P.S. Have you ever watched the bees as they fly from flower to flower searching for nectar? When they do so, they pick up yellow pollen from one flower and deposit on another. That is a process called pollinization.

Have you ever seen bees crawl under leaves on the forest floor looking for flowers? No? Neither have I. So how is Wild Ginger pollinated? Would you be surprised to know that ants and beetles do the job? I was. The flowers are so close to the ground that the ants and beetles can walk right in. Isn't nature truly amazing?