

# **Mollans - looking after our beach and reaping the rewards of its bounty**



# Seaweed harvesting

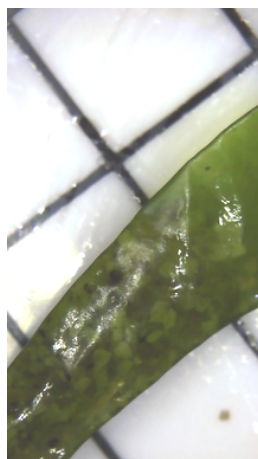
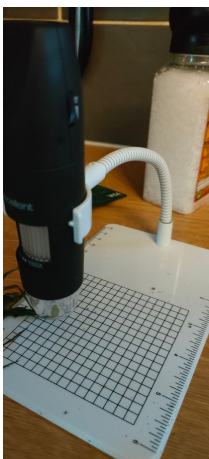
Anyone can forage seaweed for their own use but we harvest commercially and have to have a licence to do this.

The beach area and water that we harvest from belongs to the Crown Estate. We have to show that our harvesting methods are not going to cause damage to the environment and we have to give estimated weights of seaweed we wish to take, as well as mapping the area we will forage from and also how we intend to remove it. This information is passed to NatureScot to agree the terms.

Although this takes time and another cost to our business we believe it is essential to ensure the environment of our coast is as healthy as possible.

We are proud to adhere to the rules and you may well see one of us knee or waist deep collecting the seaweed by hand in the sea off Shawbost beach with scissors in hand.

The seaweed is rinsed in the sea to remove any crustaceans or other marine life, sand and debris and then brought back home. We rinse off again and any marine life is separated and returned to the ocean, some 400m away. The seaweed is then rinsed many times to remove any remaining sand.. The *Ulva Intestinalis* is hollow and holds onto sand as you can see from the highly magnified images below:





Unfortunately the humidity is so high here on the island and we do not have enough guaranteed sunshine (with warmth) to completely dry the seaweeds in the most carbon neutral way possible. We dry outside as much as we can, then finish off on a low heat in an industrial oven until completely dry.

Drying out in this manner takes a long time, fortunately the oven can take a large quantity.

Once completely dry the seaweed can go through a final process to prepare for storage.

Not all of the seaweed we collect is processed this way. When we get sugar kelp we dry naturally by hanging out and then store in a cool dry environment.

The seaweeds we are licenced to harvest are:

*Ulva Intestinalis* (Gutweed)

*Ulva Fenestrata* (Sea Lettuce)

*Osmundea Osmunda* (Pepper Dulse)

We also collect Sea Kelp from the shoreline after storms at sea. It is the only seaweed that we collect that is not actively growing at the time. This is because we only use it to wrap food (more later) and it is an acceptable form of collection.

Photos and uses of the seaweed we harvest can be seen on the following pages.





# Ulva Intestinalis (Gutweed)

This grass-like alga clings onto rocks on the mid tide line. We cut this algae in the same way you might cut grass. Leaving plenty left on the rock and only taking a little from each rock. This is the seaweed that we use to make our cheese & Seaweed Biscuits and our delicious Cheese & Seaweed scones. We also sell this in our speciality "Taste of Shawbost" jars from Mollans Rainbow Shed.



Top left:  
A shore crab on  
Gutweed.



Top Right:  
Beadlet Anemone  
next to Gutweed



Flat Periwinkle  
munching on Ulva  
Intestinalis



Gutweed  
(Ulva Intestinalis)



Shawbost  
Seasoning on  
Shawbost beach



Shawbost beach



# Ulva Fenestrata (Sea Lettuce)

\*Ulva Fenestrata, otherwise known as sea lettuce grows in similar conditions to that of the Gutweed on the previous page. This algae looks like lettuce and is a beautiful green colour.

Sea Lettuce is often found in the midline of the shore, sometimes in rockpools if the holdfast has come loose from the rocks. Often you will see little holes in the blades as this algae is only 2 cells thick and the strong tides can have a degrading effect on it.



Left: Sea Lettuce

Top right: Image showing little holes in the blade



Below right: The holdfast which would usually be attached to a rock



Left: A hermit crab emerges to have a bite of sea salad

Right: The ruffles around the blade is how Sea Lettuce got its name.



\*Ulva Fenestrata used to be classified as Ulva Lactuca but was reclassified in 2019 as Ulva Fenestrata. You may see it referred to as either.



# Osmundea Osmunda (Pepper Dulse)

Pepper Dulse is small alga which has a holdfast to secure it to a rock on the subtideline. We don't take much of this seaweed as it is not abundant where we collect. We do use a snorkel on a spring tide to go deeper into the tideline to collect our specimens.



Pepper dulse gets its name from the peppery flavour it imparts. It also has a garlicky, fishy and full of umami. Known by some chefs as "sea truffle" as it also have a taste of truffles.

I enjoyed the flavour of this small seaweed but Rachel said it tasted vile. I think it may be a marmite-type seaweed - you either love it or hate it.

Like the earlier seaweeds I dry this one but I then grind it into a powder and sprinkle it on some of the savoury dishes we cook here.





# (Saccharina Latimassa (Sugar Kelp)

Sugar Kelp grows deeper than the shoreline that we collect from but after a storm out as sea plenty gets washed up on Shawbost beach. usually you would not collect seaweed from the beach if you are going to eat it. This is because it is difficult to know how long it has been floating about or if it has come from dirtier waters. Luckily our waters are beautifully clean. Once collected it is strung out to dry until nice. It goes quite crispy.



Left: Sugar Kelp, fresh then drying out in a bunch

Right: Sugar Kelp almost completely dry



## Cooking with Sugar Kelp

First soak pre dried Sugar Kelp in Warm water for 10 mins.



This is what the rehydrateda sugar kelp will look like



Wrap a joint of meat (or vegetarian nut roast) with the sugar kelp trying to ensure there are no gaps



Roast your joint slowly and when cooked remove the sea kelp.

Voila! .... deliciously moist dinner. Now get those roast potatoes ready!



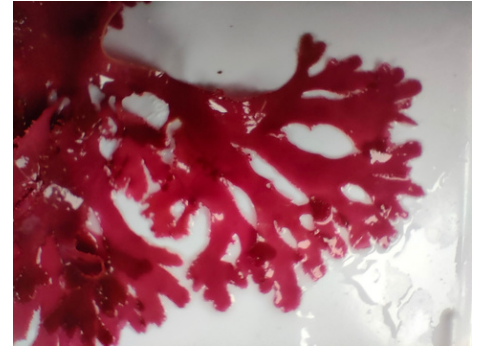


# Other seaweeds collected from Shawbost tideline

In the UK all seaweed is edible apart from one type that grows deep on the ocean floor. This is another reason why it is best not to eat washed up seaweed. Here are a few of my favourites:



Left: One of my favourites....  
*Palmaria palmata* (Dulse)



Above: *Rhodophyllis divaricata*  
(Leafy roseweed)

Below: *Polysiphonia lanosa* (wrack siphon weed)  
also known as "mermaids pubes"



Above: *Laminaria digitata* (oarweed)



Above: *Fucus vesiculosus*  
(Sea oak & Bladder wrack)





**Mastocarpus stellatus (Grape pip weed)**



**Above: Dilsea Carnosa  
(False Dulse)**



**Above: Odonthalia dentata  
(Northern Toothweed)**



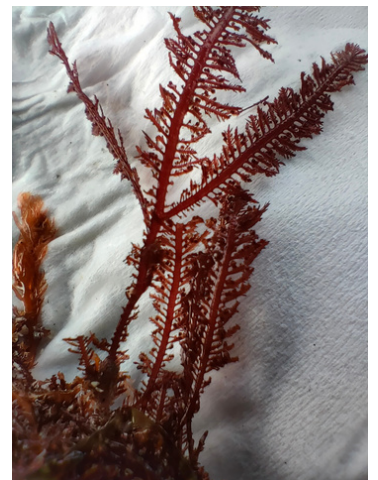
**Sargassum muticum  
(Japanese Wireweed)  
{invasive species}**



**Above: Membranoptera  
alata  
(Winged weed)**



**Above: Ascophyllum  
nodosum (Egg wrack)**



**Above: Ptilota gunneri  
(Feathered wingweed)**



# It's not just seaweed that you can forage

One of our best sellers is our Taste of Shawbost jars. These contain Shawbost sea salt and seaweed ready for you to add to your savoury cooking. The salt is really very strong in flavour and it is best to wait until the dish is cooked before adding the salt so that you can add a little more if needed. Once it is too salty it is really very hard to make your dinner tasty again.



Shawbost beach on a sunny day



Mollans "A Taste of Shawbost" available to purchase in the Rainbow Shed

We go out into the beautifully clean sea water in Shawbost bay and bring home 6 litres of salt water. The container is left for 12 hours for the debris to settle to the bottom of the container. After filtering the water (leaving the debris at the bottom of the container) the filtered sea water is put into a large pan and brought to the boil. Once boiling the water is simmered until there is just a white sludge at the bottom (this is the salt). The evaporation process can take up to 12 hours. The salt is then finally dried out in a low oven until completely dry. From 6l of water you can expect to get only 160g of salt.



Magnified salt crystals produced at Mollans



As well as foraging seaweed and making our own sea salt, we also forage locally for herbal plants and edibles, Here are a few of them all found within 400 metres of our home in Shawbost.



Angelica. We dry the seed heads and sprinkle in cakes or we grind the dried seeds and use them in curries



Sea Plantain



Sea Rocket



Mugwort (used to  
make incense  
sticks)



Yarrow



Comfrey



Gorse



Red Clover



Wild Carror



# Giving something back ....

So far this booklet has been about what Shawbost beach and surrounding areas has to offer. We can't take without giving something back. We pick rubbish and plastics from the shoreline when we are out walking the dog but it is a continuous task. Every piece of plastic has the potential to be millions of pieces of microplastics.

It can be quite hard to differentiate when our litter picking so I can see why so many mammals and fish can't tell the difference. Here are some photos taken last year on one of our walks. Can you tell which are rubbish and which are edibles?

**A**



**B**



**C**



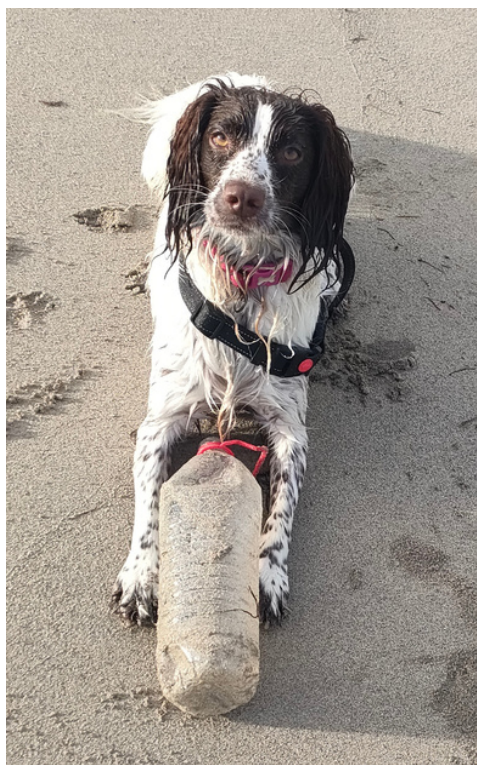
**D**



**E**



**F**



Pics A, B, C & E are all semi decomposed seaweeds which sea mammals and fish will pick up to eat.

D is frayed plastic rope which sadly sealife will also eat.

F is our wee doggie Bonnie helping out with the beach clean with a discarded plastic bottle which would eventually break up in the ocean causing microplastics to leach into the environment.