

## Figure 19.20: Mountain Ramps

### Case Study: Mountain Ramps

The Cherokee have been harvesting ramps, a wild onion (*Allium tricoccum*), in the southern Appalachians, their ancestral homelands, for thousands of years.<sup>264,265</sup> Collecting ramps for food sustenance is only one aspect of this cultural tradition. The family-bound harvesting techniques are equally as important and make up part of the deeply held tribal lifeways (Ch. 15: Tribes, KM 2). Ramps emerge in springtime and provide important nutrients after a long winter with a dearth of fresh vegetables. These plants grow in moist forest understory areas that are sensitive to temperature and soil moisture.<sup>266</sup>

In the southern Appalachians, ramps are threatened by two major processes: overharvesting pressures and a changing climate that could expose these plants to higher temperatures and lower soil moisture conditions during sensitive growth periods (Ch. 10: Ag & Rural, KM 1).<sup>267,268</sup> Although ramps are found all along the Appalachian mountain range, on Cherokee ancestral lands, they are already in their southernmost range. Climate change thus acts to increase the vulnerability of this plant to the existing stressors.



**Figure 19.20:** This up-close image of a ramp (*Allium tricoccum*), harvested from the wild, shows leaves and the bulb/corm of the plant. Photo credit: Gary Kaufman, USDA Forest Service Southern Research Station.