

Wildcrafting Guidelines

Wildcrafting is the practice of harvesting plants from their natural or “wild” habitat for food, medicine, crafting, or other purposes. It applies to uncultivated plants everywhere, not just in wilderness areas. When you are harvesting, it is important to consider the continued health and survival of the plant species, other plant and animal species in the area, and the ecosystem as a whole. Be mindful, respectful, and grateful during the process.

Guidelines for Sustainable Wildcrafting

- Think about the plant community and how many plants/parts of the plant you can gather without disturbing the habitat or the plant community’s ability to continue to thrive. One in ten plants or plant parts is the best way to think about how much is safe to harvest. That being said, sometimes you should take even less—for example, if the plant is slow to regenerate itself or if you are harvesting the root and therefore taking the life of the entire plant.
- Be mindful of the greater ecosystem; try to walk as gently as possible on the earth, and be mindful of other plants nearby. Keep in mind that almost all plants are serving as food or habitat for other species.
- Strive for zero waste, and take only as much as you need. More importantly, do not take as much as you need if there is not enough. The health of the plant comes first, and your needs come second.
- Know the endangered species in your bioregion (visit the website of United Plant Savers for a list of at-risk and “to watch” plants).
- Ask permission of the plant and environment before harvesting. Give thanks during and afterward.
- Clean up after yourself. If you are harvesting roots, fill the holes with dirt and cover them with leaves or other nearby debris. If you are not using certain parts of a plant, return them to the earth to compost.

Wildcrafting Checklist

- Do you have permission to harvest? From the landowner? From the plant?
- Have you positively identified the plant?
- Is the stand of plants you are considering big enough and healthy enough to harvest from?

- Is the stand away from roads, trails, or other areas with potential runoff or contamination? Is there a risk of natural or chemical contamination?
- Are there any rare or endangered plants growing nearby that you should be conscious of during the harvesting process?
- What is the growth pattern of this plant? Is it an annual, perennial, or biennial? How will harvesting it affect the plant's or the stand's ability to regenerate?
- Is there enough of the plant, and/or is the stand healthy enough, to harvest one in ten of the plant specimens or plant parts?