










Eat Your Weeds!

Wildcrafting Ethics + Cooking



Wildcrafting Checklist

by Howie Brounstein

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- Do you have the permission or the permits for collecting at the site?
 - Do you have a positive identification?
 - Are there better stands nearby? Is the stand big enough?
 - Are you at the proper elevation?
 - Is the stand away from roads and trails?
 - Is the stand healthy?
 - Is there any chemical contamination?
 - Is there any natural contamination?
 - Are you in a fragile environment?
 - Are there rare, threatened, endangered, or sensitive plants growing nearby at any time of the year?
 - Is wildlife foraging the stand?
 - Is the stand growing, shrinking, or staying the same size?
 - Is the plant an annual or a perennial?
 - Is tending necessary and what kind?
 - How much to pick?
 - Time of day? Time of year?
 - What effect will your harvest have on the stand?
 - Do you have the proper emotional state?
 - Move around during harvesting.
 - Look around after harvesting. Any holes or cleanup needed?
 - Are you picking herbs in the proper order for a long trip?
 - Are you cleaning herbs in the field?
 - Do you have the proper equipment for in-field processing?

Wildcrafting Considerations

Northeast School of Botanical Medicine

1. Please don't over-harvest. Be considerate of the land from which you are gathering. Consider this piece of earth from many perspectives. Contemplate it from the perspective of the animals living there, from the humans who visit, and from the perspective of the plants themselves in their ecological niche.
2. Leave an area as beautiful as you found it. Before you gather anything, let your eyes sweep in the terrain and consider how you can leave the least amount of impact.
3. If there is a lot of trash from a given gathering area, gather some of this too.
4. Learn which plants not to gather, including endangered, over-harvested and scarce plants. With current sprawling development coupled with a popular resurgence of herbal medicine, many plants are currently threatened. Check resources such as native plant societies, conservation groups, United Plant Savers, regional groups, and state environmental departments for guides to endangered plants. Also, check it out for yourself. Which plants are proliferating in your area and which plants are disappearing? With an eye towards the future, consider not gathering plants that are not yet in jeopardy, but are becoming scarce, or may be so in the future as more plants are harvested for the burgeoning herbal market.
5. Teach responsible wildcrafting ethics. Teach by example and let other folks know why you don't harvest particular plants or gather from specific locales. Help instruct other gatherers whom you feel may be over-harvesting. Let buyers know why you won't gather or sell certain plants. Speak up at conferences, workshops and meetings.
6. Learn about the most prolific plants, especially the common weeds. Many of these have well established uses and can be harvested readily. They generally easily reestablish themselves.
7. Learn how to make accurate plant identification. It is important to know how to accurately identify plants to the species level. Books based on floral plant keys are the primary source of this information.
8. Learning how to use a plant identification key will help in a number of ways. It will assist you in the identification of uncommon plant species, which may otherwise be indiscriminately gathered or trampled on. And it can also be instructive in finding species analogues of overharvested plants.
9. Be discreet when showing people your wildcrafting locations. If one person tells one person, who tells one person, etc., an area can easily be over-harvested. When demonstrating and teaching wildcrafting skills, take people to places that can handle a group of gatherers and gather the common plants.
10. Rescue plants from areas that are going to be developed or destroyed. Besides gathering these plants as medicine, you can also help relocate the less common ones to similar habitats and gardens.
11. Bring medicine making equipment (see list) on wildcrafting forays so you can prepare fresh plant medicines on your travels.
12. Wildcrafting and the law: Since most land is either privately owned, state or federally controlled, you may want to obtain permission before gathering. Since wildcrafters may be eyed with suspicion (not a typical sight) make sure your 'papers' are in order, i.e., car registration and insurance, personal identification, appropriate cash, etc.
13. Gather seeds and replant them.
14. While gathering roots and rhizomes, replant root crowns and rhizome pieces, especially if there is a bud present to help the plant regrow.
15. Gather and sell wildcrafted plants locally. Encourage the use of locally common plants as medicine.
16. Wildcraft from organic gardens and farms. These places often have an abundance of medicinal plants such as dandelion, burdock, alfalfa, and red clover. Also support local organic farmers in helping them grow and market medicinal plants.
17. Leave some of the strongest and most lush plants from an area you are wildcrafting. These are important to continue the local health and survival of a species.
18. Be respectful of the plants you are gathering. This means gathering thoughtfully as if you were working in a garden including careful pruning, and not leaving big gaping holes in the ground.
19. Be careful not to gather from polluted areas. These include roadways, railroad tracks, industrial and agricultural runoff, urban areas, sewage zones, oil spills, and places heavily sprayed with pesticides and/or herbicides.
20. It is important to initially learn all the poisonous plants growing in an area you may be wildcrafting to be absolutely sure that you have not harvested these.
21. International borders: Many plants are not allowed through foreign borders and may be confiscated, such as in Mexico and Canada. Keep this in mind while gathering or bringing plants into or back from other countries.

Resource list

Books:

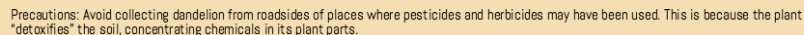
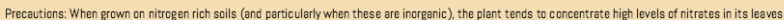
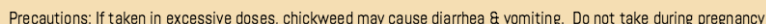
- *Botany in A Day by Thomas J. Elpel
- *Plants of the Mountain West by Michael Moore
- *Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast by Pojar

Websites:

- *<http://www.ryandrum.com/wildcrafting.htm>
- *<http://botanicalstudies.net/wildcrafting/wildcrafting-for-beginners/>
- *<https://theherbalacademy.com/10-tips-for-wildcrafting-medicinal-herbs/>

Instagram Accounts:

- @alltogethernow_us
- @wildfoodlove
- @pascalbaudar
- @thegreatkosmickitchen



1. Dandelion: the Backyard Herbal Remedy, Dandelion the Backyard Herbal Remedy Comments 2013. Available at: <http://www.blessedherbs.com/resources/dandelion-the-backyard-herbal-remedy/>. Accessed March 24, 2016.
2. What is IFPAF? Plants for A Future: 7000 Edible, Medicinal & Useful Plants Available at: <http://www.plantsforafuture.org/ifaaf.aspx>. Accessed March 24, 2016.
3. Welcome to Montana Plant Life! Montana Plant Life. Available at: <http://montana-plant-life.org/>. Accessed March 24, 2016.
4. Foraging Texas. Foraging Texas. Available at: <http://www.foragingtexas.com/>. Accessed March 24, 2016.
5. Green Street Stewards' Weed Identification Guide. Available at: <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/tea/files/4719391>.
6. Afta & 300 Herbs: Their Indications & Contraindications: a Materia Medica B&C: Repository, with Insights from American Eclectic Medicine, Phyto Medicine, Transmutation, Appalachian Folk Herbalism, Native-American Plant Medicine, Curanderismo, Modern Western Phytotherapy, European Herbal Tradition, Jñani Top, Traditional Chinese Medicine, B&C, Ayurvedic Medicine - a Manual for Herbal Students and Practitioners. New Brighton, MN: Dr. Theology Book House; 2003.