

# Wildcrafting Guidelines

## 3 Keys to Exploring Medicinal Wild Plants



The art of wildcrafting may seem mysterious and intimidating at first. Yet it's also exciting and fun. Many common medicinal plants are so abundant that they're considered "weeds!" As you head out into the field, these three keys will help get you started and guide your way.

And remember, wild plants make wild women!

## 1 Choosing WHERE to harvest medicinal plants

- Look for wild medicinal plants among the common weeds in your backyard, at community gardens, nearby farms, even a local park. They may even be growing in your porch planters.
- Ask permission before harvesting on someone else's property. You'll be surprised how happy most people are for you to harvest their "weeds!" (They might even want to know about what you're using them for.)
- Avoid areas that are likely to be sprayed such as power lines, train tracks, golf courses, or weedless yards. As you return to your harvest sites over time, notice if large sections are brown, which could indicate periodic herbicide applications.
- Don't gather within 50 feet from a busy road, especially downhill from one. Along quiet country roads is generally fine.

*Which spots in your stomping grounds would you like to get to know some plants?*



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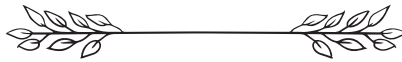
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## 2

# Identifying WHAT plants to harvest

- Start with a few easily recognizable plants, and get to know new plants slowly.
- Make note of the poisonous plants that grow in your area, and learn whether the plant you're harvesting has any poisonous look-alikes.
  - Poisonous plants include: skunk cabbage, poison hemlock, water hemlock
- In general, take no more of a third of a patch, so it can continue to regrow. Avoid harvesting endangered plants altogether. (Luckily, many edible and medicinal plants are prolific "weeds" that you don't need to worry about over-harvesting.)



## Plant Identification



I recommend getting a *Peterson Field Guide to Wildflowers* for your region. They are very user-friendly, organized by flower color (rather than a keying system) and clear line drawings.

Note: Relying on electronic apps for identifying medicinal herbs is risky. Or even general books for edible/medicinal plants. You could always refer back to those once you've identified your plant.

### 4 Steps for using your Peterson's wildflowers field guide

1. Scroll through to find the section for your flower color
2. Go through that section page by page until you find the page(s) with flowers of a similar structure as the plant you are identifying (that's how plants are classified botanically).
3. When you find a possible match, read the brief description which often includes where the plant might be found, the size, and when the flower blooms.
4. Note the arrows pointing to features in the line drawings that are used to positively identify the plant



# ③ Determining **WHEN** to harvest medicinal plants

- Return often to your harvesting sites.
  - Get to know the plants in different phases of their lifecycle.
  - Visit when the plant is flowering to positively identify the plant.
- Find out what part of the plant you want is the most medicinal, to help you determine the optimal time of year to harvest.



|          |  |                           |
|----------|--|---------------------------|
| Blossoms | harvest when in full bloom                             | spring or summer          |
| Leaves   | harvest when leaves are lush                           | spring or summer          |
| Roots    | harvest after a hard frost, when leaves have died back | late fall or early winter |

- Ask the plant for permission to harvest. Listen intuitively for guidance from your green ally.

*Notes*

| Plants you're interested in              | When to harvest                          |
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