

An Environmental Project | Fall 2022

A UConn Foraging Guide



WHY FORAGING IS IMPORTANT

The fundamental ideologies of our Civilization are based on hierarchy, control, domination, and anthropocentrism. We, the “civilized people,” are socialized to be disembodied and disconnected from Mother Earth so that our exploitation of her can be expedited. One form this takes is our view of all natural things— from animals to plants to insects to rocks and rivers— as either lesser than human or “inanimate”; said view doesn’t come naturally but has instead been constructed and imposed, as all living beings and all human societies with the exception of Civilization have seen the entirety of the Universe as living and thus have held an “animistic” understanding. Another way we are socialized is in our disconnect from the food we eat. We aren’t made to vividly fathom how all of our sustenance comes from the Earth and is taking from a living thing; instead we are made distant from the sources of our sustenance, and “life” is reconceptualized into the objectified “food,” with “plants and animals” being reconceptualized into “crops” and “meat,” degraded into natural “resources.” As explained by Charles Eisenstein, “The physical and social distance from slaughterhouse to dinner table insulates us from the fear and pain the animals feel as they are led to the slaughter, and turns a dead animal into just ‘a piece of meat.’”

Foraging is a way in which we can combat these socializations and reclaim our birthright to a respectful relationship with Nature— in doing so, learning to care for our greater family that is “Life” and rebelling against the dominant imperial paradigms of Civilization which rape and devour the world.

“Recognition of personhood [of the living things we consume] does not mean that we don’t consume, but that we are accountable for the lives that we take. When we speak of the living world as kin, we also are called to act in new ways, so that when we take those lives, we must do it in such a way that brings honor to the life that is taken and honor to the ones receiving it.”

Thus, Indigenous tradition gifts us the doctrine of the Honorable Harvest:

“Ask permission of the ones whose lives you seek.

Abide by the answer.

Never take the first.

Never take the last.

Harvest in a way that minimizes harm.

Take only what you need and leave some for others.

Use everything that you take.

Take only that which is given to you.

Share it, as the Earth has shared with you.

Be grateful.

Reciprocate the gift.

Sustain the ones who sustain you, and the Earth will last forever.”

-Robin Wall Kimmerer

“Native hunting and gathering at both the levels of process and experience placed Native people in constant participation with their sources of food. There are few other experiences that can develop empathy for the natural world in this way.”

-Gregory Cajete

For more teaching on Native foraging, embodiment in Nature, and spiritual enrichment, look to Native accounts of the Honorable Harvest (an exemplary article found below), as well as Charles Eisenstein’s article “The Ethics of Eating Meat” (given below as well), Gregory Cajetes’s thoroughly written work “Native Science” and Judie Bopp’s “The Sacred Tree.”

<https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/good-health/2015/11/26/the-honorable-harvest-lessons-from-an-indigenous-tradition-of-giving-thanks>

<https://charleseisenstein.org/essays/the-ethics-of-eating-meat/>



plants we found On Campus

Dandelions

Description: Very common yellow flowering plant most consider a weed.

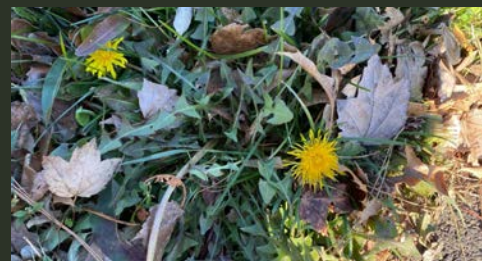
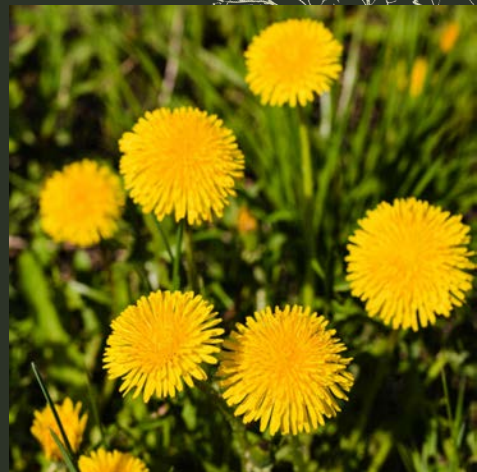
Where to find on/near campus: Most grassy areas.

Edible Parts: Roots, Leaves and Flowers eaten raw or cooked.

Health Benefits: High in vitamin K, A and C, natural diuretic, promotes digestion

Season: May to October

Taste: Bitter and tangy



<https://www.treehugger.com/eat-dandelions-edible-garden-weeds-4858806>

Black Walnut

Description: These nuts are encapsulated in a green husk similar to a tennis ball.

On Campus: HEEP Trail near Innovation Building.

Edible Parts: white flesh inside nut

Season: Fall

Taste: sweet and earthy

How to Eat: Crack open Husk and shell, take out meat inside and allow to dry for a day, enjoy



can-eat-

<https://www.metroparks.net/blog/you-that-black->

[walnut/#:~:text=Black%20walnuts%20can%20be%20enjoyed,and%20made%20into%20a%20flour](#)

Acorn

Description: Nut of the Oak Tree, popular with squirrels.

On Campus: Under any Oak tree.

Edible Parts: Raw acorns are inedible unless leached of toxic tannins.



Season: Fall

Health Benefits: High in potassium, iron, vitamins A and E

How to Eat: Acorns need to be leached before consumption

Leaching Process:

1. Shell acorns
2. Soak shelled acorns in hot or cold water
3. Once water turns brown, drain it off and soak again in fresh hot or cold water
4. Repeat process until the water is clear

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/blog/2019/09/are-acorns-edible-and-other-acorn-facts/#:~:text=Why%20do%20acorns%20fall%3F,to%20new%20locations%20by%20wildlife.>

Reishi Mushroom

“mushroom of immortality”

Description: Fan shaped polypore with a distinctly shiny top, ranging from orange to red, revered in Chinese medicine.



Where to find on campus: Bases of dead and dying trees

Medicinal Properties: support and balance the immune system, balances levels of stress, supports blood pressure and cholesterol management, anti-bacterial

Season: May to October

Best way to use: Tinctures



<https://practicalselfreliance.com/foraging-reishi-mushrooms/>

Other plants in the area

Purslane

Description: Small succulent paddle leaves up to inch long

Where to find on campus: Grows low and flat to ground in sunny dry spots

Edible Parts: leaves and stems

Health Benefits: High in iron, vitamin A and C, and omega 3 fatty acids

Season: Spring to Fall

Taste: Tart and Lemony

How to Use: Leafy green in Salads/Sandwiches



<https://backyardforager.com/purslane-portulaca-oleracea-verdolagas/>



Wood Sorrel

Description: Reaches about 8-9in tall, 3 heart shaped leaflets, leaflets fold up at night and open during day, mostly green but can be purple

Where to find on campus: any grassy area with shade

Edible Parts: leaves, stems, flowers, seed pods, roots

Health Benefits: Vitamin C, used to treat sore throat, urinary infections, nausea, high in protein + antioxidants

Season: Spring to Fall

Taste: Tart and Lemony

How to Use: Leafy green in Salads/Sandwiches

<https://www.wildedible.com/wild-food-guide/wood-sorrel#range>



Dryad's Saddle Mushroom

Description: Cream/ochre with brown scales and pores (not gills) on the underside, 70cm diameter. (However, best to eat them in their youth, when around 6cm in diameter; otherwise they're tough and hard to digest)



Where to find on campus: Growing out of the wood on broad-leaved trees.

Edible Parts: All.

Health Benefits: Low in sodium, high in essential minerals and vitamins, and a great source of protein.

Season: April-August

Taste: "Farinaceous" -- of starch or grain. Also sometimes smells/tastes like cucumber or watermelon rind.

How to Use: Slice and cook the young flesh, possibly in butter or oil. Prepare as desired.

<https://gallowaywildfoods.com/dryads-saddle-edibility-identification-distribution/>



Blueberries

Description: Lowbush around 6-12 inches. No thorns, canes come straight from the soil, and clusters of pink/white flowers in the Spring.

Highbush can grow to 12 feet, though commonly around 6 feet.



Where to find on campus: Somewhat sunny locations; we've heard word that there are some near one of the dorm buildings.

Edible Parts: the berry.

Health Benefits: Wild blueberries provide 33% more anthocyanins and 2x antioxidants than agriculturally grown blueberries.

Season: July-August, depending on climate.

Taste: Sweeter, tangier, and more intense than cultivated blueberries, with less water.

How to Use: Jams, pastries and desserts, eaten directly— many many possibilities.

<https://www.outdoorapothecary.com/wild-blueberries/>

Recipes

Dandelion Flower Tea

How to:

- Pick 10 dandelion flowers and discard leaves
- Keep this ingredient in a pitcher
- Let boil 1 cup of water in a saucepan
- When the water is hot enough, pour it in the pitcher
- Let it steep for 20 minutes
- Restrain the mixture
- Add 2 tablespoons of honey and stir well



<https://teaswan.com/blogs/news/how-to-make-dandelion-tea>

Reishi Mushroom Tincture

- Thinly slice mushrooms
- Fill mason jar $\frac{2}{3}$ fill of mushrooms
- Cover mushrooms



- with 80 proof alcohol an inch from the rim of the jar
- Let sit for at least 2 weeks in cool dark space, shake jar everyday
- Strain through mesh strainer and set alcohol aside
- Place mushrooms in a pot, add $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon of water for every 2 cups of mushrooms
- Simmer mushrooms low for 2 hours
- Water extract should be reduced to a $\frac{1}{3}$ of alcohol extract
- Once water extract is cooled, mix with alcohol extract and bottle in tincture bottle

<https://practicalselfreliance.com/reishi-mushroom-tincture/>

Yellow Wood Sorrel Syrup

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups of wood sorrel, tightly packed
- 1 cup of sugar
- 1 cup of water

INSTRUCTIONS

- Wash the wood sorrel to remove any dirt or grit that might be clinging to it, then cut it into small pieces so that it will dissolve more readily in hot water. Make sure you don't include any stems—just leaves!
- Put the wood sorrel in a saucepan with 1 cup of water, then bring it to a boil over medium. Cook for 5 minutes or until leaves has wilted into the liquid. This will help them release their flavor more quickly!
- Turn off and remove the pan from heat and let the syrup sit for 30 minutes so wood sorrel can infuse into the water. Then
- Strain out your wood sorrel leaves (you can use a fine-mesh strainer if you don't want any bits left behind). Return to saucepan and add 1 cup of sugar. Heat on low until sugar is thoroughly combined.
- Pour it into a jar or container with a tight-fitting lid so no air can get inside (this will prevent spoilage).



<https://slowlivingkitchen.com/sour-grass-syrup-wood-sorrel/>

