



Respectful Harvest - Foraging Considerations Part 1

Plants have so many gifts to share, from food and medicine to materials for crafting and whittling, to fuel for our fires. Here we consider how we can harvest from the plants in a respectful way, in a way that can leave the plant population even stronger than we found it!

Primer

Let's learn from indigenous wisdom how to approach plants to both harvest what we need and leave them better than we found them. Plants are all unique, with different qualities, medicines and hazards to be aware of and so it's worth getting to know them as individuals rather than the 'wall of green' they can appear as.

Points to Remember

- *Approach Plants with Respect.* Ask the question: how can I harvest you respectfully? See what arises in response to this question.
- *Don't harvest the First Plant we See.* This is because it could be the only one. Check the local environment for how abundant it is and whether there is enough to harvest without damaging the ecology.
- *Don't Harvest from the Grandparent Plants.* This supports the strong and established genes remaining in the community (just as with the principle of hunting, we can strengthen the herd by hunting the weaker members and leaving the strongest to reproduce).
- *Asking Permission* - this feels polite and it's interesting what arises in children and adults when asking from their heart if it feels OK to harvest from this plant. Rather than words as a response, it can often come as an expansive feeling relating to 'yes' and feelings of contraction relating to 'no'. You can encourage the participants to ask the question: If I were this plant, how would I like to be harvested?
- *Giving Back and Offerings* - inspiration can come in response to asking the question: What could I do to give back? This could be simply with silent gratitude felt inside, it could be with a song, it could be by giving an offering of oats or barley as was traditional in the British Isles. Perhaps you'll be inspired to clear some of the dead matter around the plant to give it more space to grow and thrive, or to come back in the autumn to gather and scatter the seeds in areas you feel they would like to grow.
- *Indigenous Wisdom* - It's been found that where a certain plant has been harvested by an indigenous culture for many years, many generations, the population of that plant is thriving more than where it has not been harvested. This is due to the way they tend the plant populations in association with harvesting from them.

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- *Share What you Make* or what you've gathered with others - pass the plant's generosity forward.

Respectful Legal Considerations around Foraging

- Section 13 of the **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981** identifies measures for the protection of wild plants. Here you will find which species are currently protected.
- Certain species are protected and as such must not be foraged. You could consider how we can support this species to grow and thrive in your area.
- National Parks and some Private Estates may well have their own rules and regulations about foraging. If you're intending to forage, you'll need to ascertain what these may be.
- It is illegal to dig up roots without the land owner's permission.

Related reading

- Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Kimmerer
- Ted Talk by Robin Kimmerer: Reclaiming the Honorable Harvest
- Tending the Wild by MK Anderson

Equipment Needed

This will vary depending on what you're harvesting. At times tools such as scissors, knives, secateurs, gloves can be helpful. However, where possible, it feels more connective to harvest with our own hands. For wild foods and medicines you will generally want at least one basket or gathering bowl.

Invisible Learning

- Learning about the seasons and cycles of your place
- Empathy for other species
- Connection to place through the plants
- Caretaking Principles of leaving a place better than you found it
- Nurturing awareness and reciprocity in relationships

Hazards to Highlight

- There are clear hazards to foraging plants for food and medicine - please ensure you watch our follow on video: Safe Foraging Practice which highlights the primary hazards.

Risk Assessment Considerations

These are the risk assessment consideration documents to be referred to for this activity.

- Plant Related Activities
- Site risk assessment (specific to your site)

Links

- Safe Foraging Practice
- Spring Nettles
- Dandelion Fritters

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Tags

- Foraging
- Caretaking
- Looking After Nature