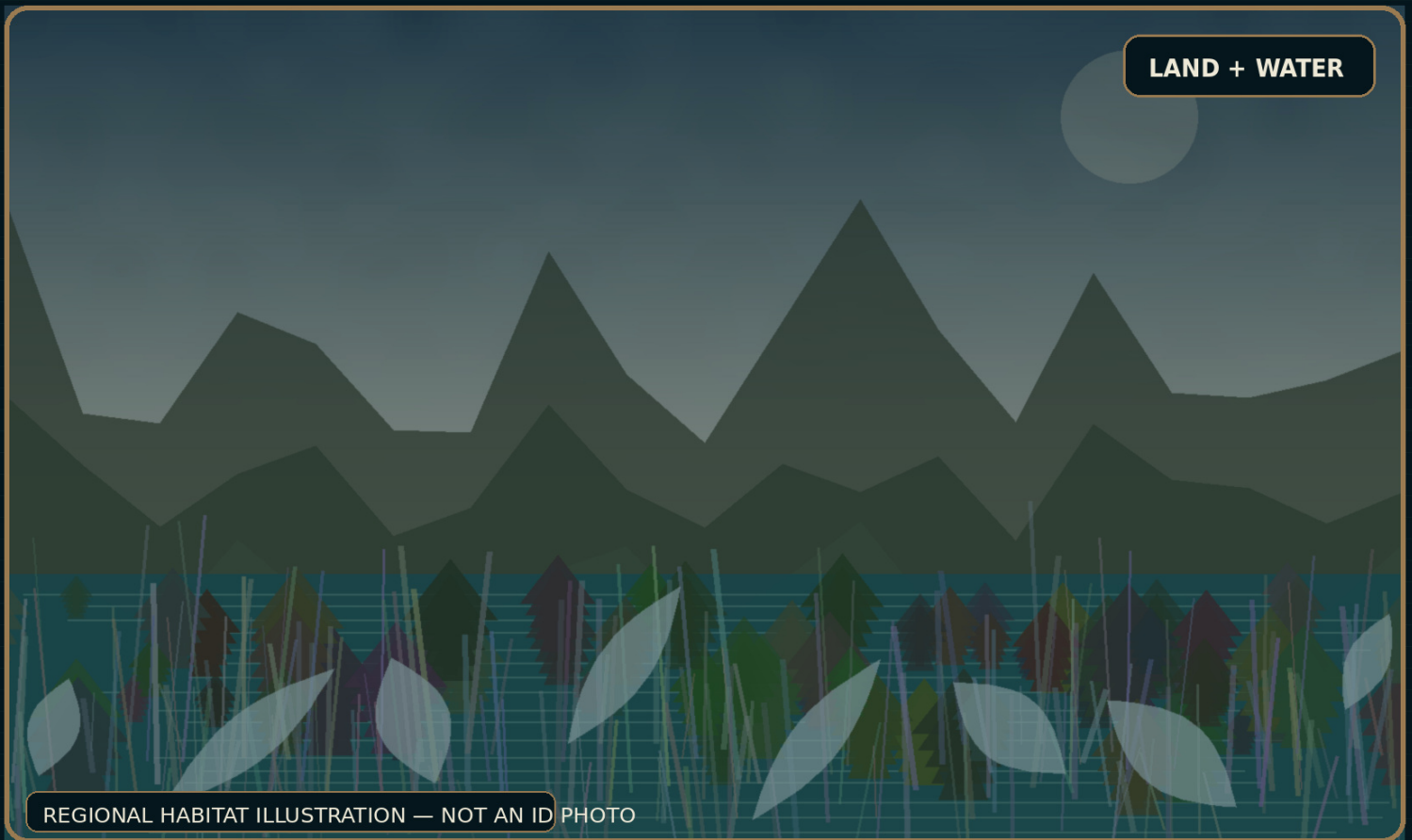


HIMALAYAN FOOTHILLS & TEMPERATE FOREST PLANT SURVIVAL GUIDE

Asia • USDA-EQUIVALENT ZONES 5-9 • KÖPPEN Cwa / Cwb / Dwb



USEFUL

EDIBLE

MEDICINAL

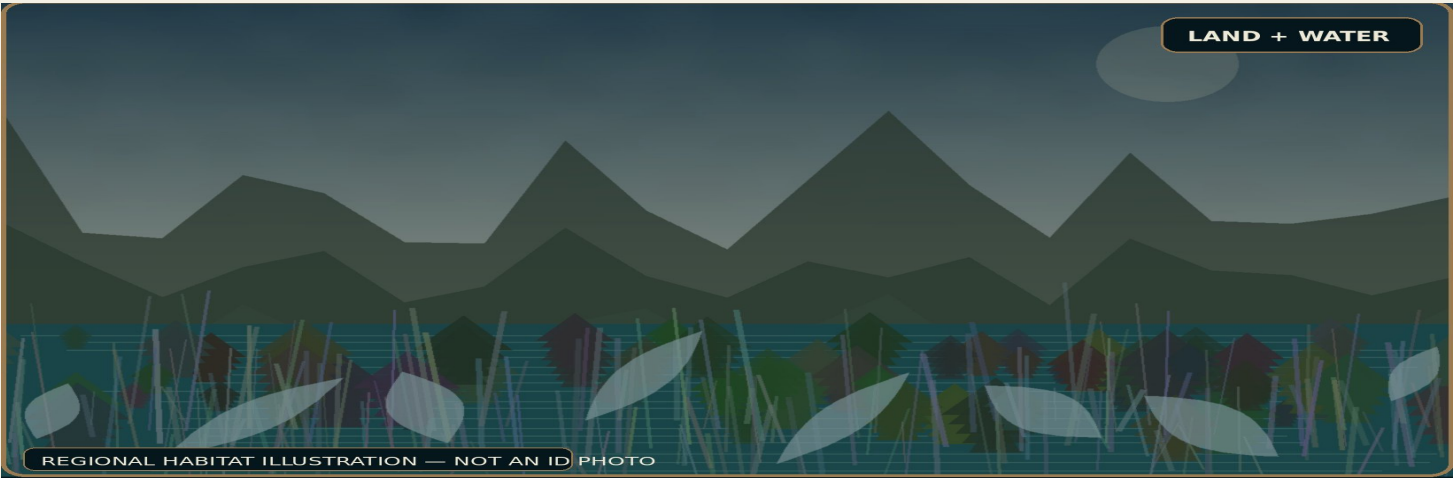
POISONOUS

IDENTIFY • EAT • BUILD • HEAL • AVOID

Illustrations show habitat and form; verify every plant with current regional photographs and expert sources.

REGION AT A GLANCE

A continental bioclimatic region, not a destination or a promise that every listed plant occurs at every site.



Continent: Asia USDA-equivalent hardiness: 5-9 Köppen: Cwa / Cwb / Dwb
Regional habitat: Sal forest, oak-rhododendron forest, pine belt and river valley
Zone warning: hardiness describes winter minimum temperature only; rainfall, heat, soils, fire, elevation and seasonality still control the flora.

FIELD PRIORITIES

- Use the continent, climate band and habitat as filters — never as proof of identity.
- Match at least three independent traits and rule out every dangerous look-alike before harvest.
- Treat water plants as both botanical and water-quality decisions; parasites, sewage and algal toxins can defeat correct identification.
- Take material from deadfall or abundant growth first. Roots, bark and whole plants are the most destructive harvests.
- Medicinal notes document traditional use only; the guide gives no dosing and does not replace medical care.

SURVIVAL STANDARD

A correct plant name is only the beginning. Also verify plant part, maturity, preparation, dose, contamination, legal access and local cultural protocol. When any one of those is uncertain, do not consume or medicate.

POSITIVE IDENTIFICATION AND PRACTICAL USE

The illustrations are form diagrams. The linked POWO and iNaturalist pages provide current photographs and taxonomic context.

- 1. PLACE**
Confirm continent, elevation, water regime, soil and disturbance.
- 2. FORM**
Tree, shrub, vine, herb, grass, sedge, palm, fern, succulent or aquatic.
- 3. LEAF**
Arrangement, veins, edge, hairs, glands, sap, odor and underside.
- 4. STEM / BARK**
Thorns, pith, nodes, buds, lenticels, fibers, latex and branching.
- 5. FLOWER / FRUIT**
Petal count, inflorescence, fruit attachment, seed and maturity.
- 6. EXCLUDE**
Name every dangerous look-alike and explain why it is different.
- 7. VERIFY**
Use current regional flora, qualified local knowledge and several photos.

AUTOMATIC STOP LIST

No tasting to identify.
No unknown roots, bulbs or white umbels.
No unknown milky sap.
No raw wetland foods.
No medicinal dose experiments.
No smoke from unknown toxic wood.

USEFUL-PLANT HIERARCHY

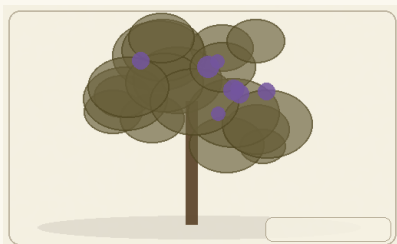
1. Deadfall and shed bark.
2. Abundant annual greens and fruit.
3. Pruned shoots and leaves.
4. Small stems from common thickets.
5. Roots, bark and whole plants only with permission and no safer substitute.

USEFUL PLANTS FOR TOOLS, FIRE AND SHELTER

Wood, fiber, tinder, bow-and-arrow components, friction fire, containers and construction.

SAL

USEFUL MATERIAL



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Shorea robusta

IDENTIFY: Tall straight tree; thick leathery oval leaves with prominent veins; winged fruits; rough dark bark.

HABITAT / SEASON: South Asian monsoon forest and foothill plains. Season: Wood year-round; seeds seasonal.

SURVIVAL USE: Very strong construction wood, durable fuel and leaf plates; resin and seeds have documented regional uses.

CAUTION: Heavy wood is poor bow-drill board material. Harvest is regulated and forests are often protected.

LOOK-ALIKES: Dipterocarps share winged fruit; local identification is needed.

TASKS: construction, fuel, leaf container, resin

Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

1

DEODAR CEDAR

USEFUL MATERIAL



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Cedrus deodara

IDENTIFY: Long soft needles in clusters on short shoots; large upright barrel-shaped cones; drooping branch tips.

HABITAT / SEASON: Western Himalayan montane forest. Season: Year-round.

SURVIVAL USE: Strong aromatic wood for beams, pegs and fuel; resin-rich chips aid ignition.

CAUTION: Large old trees are culturally important and often protected. Resin smoke needs ventilation.

LOOK-ALIKES: Blue pine has needles in bundles of five and hanging cones.

TASKS: construction, pegs, fuel, tinder

Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

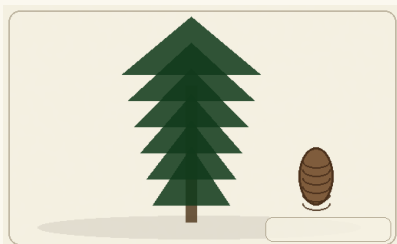
2

USEFUL PLANTS FOR TOOLS, FIRE AND SHELTER

Wood, fiber, tinder, bow-and-arrow components, friction fire, containers and construction.

HIMALAYAN BLUE PINE

USEFUL MATERIAL



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Pinus wallichiana

IDENTIFY: Five long slender drooping needles per bundle; large hanging cones; gray bark.

HABITAT / SEASON: Himalayan temperate forest and dry valleys. Season: Seeds autumn; wood year-round.

SURVIVAL USE: Straight poles, resinous kindling and edible pine seeds, though kernels are smaller than chilgoza.

CAUTION: Cones and limbs fall; harvest may be restricted.

LOOK-ALIKES: Deodar has clustered needles and upright cones.

TASKS: poles, fuel, tinder, food seed

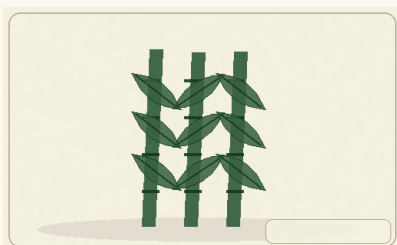
Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

3

ASIAN BAMBOOS

USEFUL MATERIAL



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Bambusa / Dendrocalamus / Phyllostachys spp.

IDENTIFY: Hollow or thick-walled segmented culms; branches at nodes; narrow grass leaves.

HABITAT / SEASON: Asian tropical, subtropical and temperate forest, river valleys and disturbed ground. Season: Culms year-round; shoots rainy or spring season.

SURVIVAL USE: Shelter, containers, bows, arrow shafts, spears, traps, rafts, cordage strips and friction-fire sets; selected young shoots are food after boiling.

CAUTION: Shoot cyanide varies; never eat raw unknown bamboo shoots. Green culms can split in fire.

LOOK-ALIKES: Giant reeds lack woody branched culms.

TASKS: construction, bow wood, arrow shaft, container, bow drill, food shoot

Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

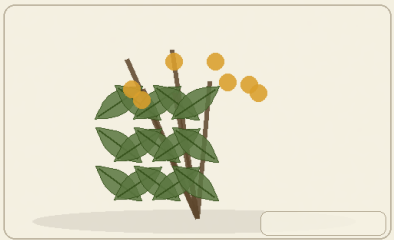
4

USEFUL PLANTS FOR TOOLS, FIRE AND SHELTER

Wood, fiber, tinder, bow-and-arrow components, friction fire, containers and construction.

DOGWOOD

USEFUL MATERIAL



Cornus spp.

IDENTIFY: Usually opposite branching; arcuate leaf veins curve toward the tip; clustered flowers and drupes.

HABITAT / SEASON: Forest edge, riparian thicket and mountain slope. Season: Stems year-round; fruit varies by species.

SURVIVAL USE: Dense straight shoots make excellent arrow shafts, skewers and pegs.
 CAUTION: Fruit edibility varies greatly; some species cause stomach upset. Use as material unless species is confirmed.
 LOOK-ALIKES: Viburnums may have opposite leaves but different veins and buds.
 TASKS: arrow shaft, pegs, skewers

Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

5

MATERIAL SELECTION SCREEN

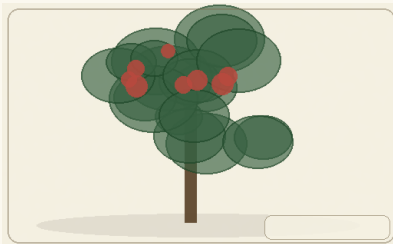
Before cutting, test straightness, grain, dryness, hidden rot, sap or smoke toxicity, and whether the species is protected. Match the material to the load: springy bow wood, straight shaft wood, soft dry hearth board, harder spindle, fibrous cordage, or resin-free cooking fuel.

LAND-BASED EDIBLE PLANTS

Documented foods on dry or seasonally dry ground. Preparation and contamination still matter.

WILD WALNUTS

LAND FOOD



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Juglans spp.

IDENTIFY: Large alternate compound leaves; chambered twig pith; green husks around hard corrugated nuts.

HABITAT / SEASON: Temperate Asian and North American valleys and mountain forest. Season: Nuts autumn; wood year-round.

SURVIVAL USE: Nuts are high-energy food; hard wood makes bows, handles and tools; husks provide dye.

CAUTION: Nut allergy and mold risk; husk juice stains and may irritate.

LOOK-ALIKES: Hickory husks split cleanly and twig pith differs.

TASKS: food nut, bow wood, handles, dye

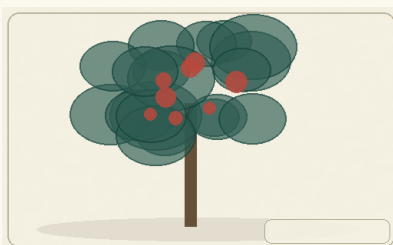
Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

6

ASIAN CHESTNUTS

LAND FOOD



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Castanea mollissima / C. crenata

IDENTIFY: Long sharply toothed leaves; nuts enclosed in dense spiny burs.

HABITAT / SEASON: East Asian temperate forest and old cultivation. Season: Nuts autumn; wood year-round.

SURVIVAL USE: Nuts are high-energy food after roasting; wood makes bows, stakes and fuel.

CAUTION: Burs are extremely sharp. Moldy nuts are unsafe.

LOOK-ALIKES: Horse chestnut has palmately compound leaves and toxic shiny seeds in fewer-spined husks.

TASKS: food nut, bow wood, stakes, fuel

Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

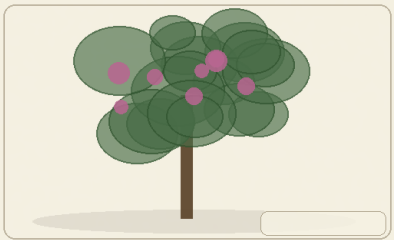
7

LAND-BASED EDIBLE PLANTS

Documented foods on dry or seasonally dry ground. Preparation and contamination still matter.

ASIAN PERSIMMONS

LAND FOOD



Diospyros kaki / D. lotus

IDENTIFY: Alternate glossy leaves; urn-like flowers; orange to purple fruits with large persistent calyx.

HABITAT / SEASON: East Asian forest edges, valleys and abandoned orchards. Season: Fruit autumn.

SURVIVAL USE: Fully ripe fruit is documented food; dense wood makes pegs and small tools.

CAUTION: Unripe fruit is intensely astringent. Cultivated ownership and species matter.

LOOK-ALIKES: Date plum and other Diospyros vary in fruit size and color.

TASKS: food fruit, pegs, tools

Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

8

STINGING NETTLE

LAND FOOD



Urtica dioica

IDENTIFY: Opposite sharply toothed leaves; fibrous stems; translucent stinging hairs; green flower clusters.

HABITAT / SEASON: Rich disturbed soil, river terraces, old camps and forest openings. Season: Young tops spring; fiber later.

SURVIVAL USE: Young tops are documented food after thorough cooking or drying; mature stems yield strong bast fiber.

CAUTION: Wear gloves; do not eat raw. Internal use can affect medicines and kidney conditions.

LOOK-ALIKES: Dead-nettles do not sting and have showier mint-family flowers.

TASKS: food green, cordage, fiber

Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

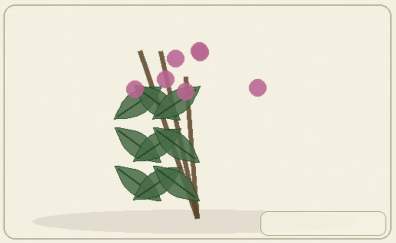
9

Educational reference — verify locally before eating, treating, cutting or burning any plant.
 Himalayan Foothills & Temperate Forest | 8

LAND-BASED EDIBLE PLANTS

Documented foods on dry or seasonally dry ground. Preparation and contamination still matter.

WILD ONIONS AND GARLIC
LAND FOOD



Allium spp.

IDENTIFY: Narrow leaves or hollow stems; spherical flower heads; clear onion or garlic odor in leaf and bulb.

HABITAT / SEASON: Meadows, rocky slopes, open woodland and stream terraces. Season: Spring through fall.

SURVIVAL USE: Leaves, flowers and bulbs of positively identified Allium are documented food and seasoning.
 CAUTION: Every sampled part must smell of onion, but odor is not the only test. Avoid unknown bulbs.
 LOOK-ALIKES: Death camas lacks onion odor and can be fatal.
 TASKS: food green, food bulb

Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

10

FOOD HARVEST SCREEN

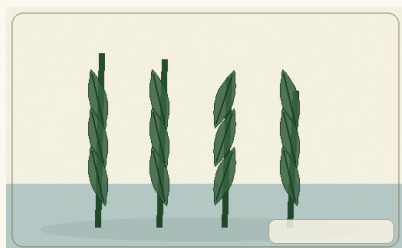
Confirm species, plant part and maturity. Check whether cooking, leaching, peeling, fermenting or repeated water changes are required. Reject mold, animal contamination, roadside plants, chemically treated ground and any food whose safe preparation cannot be completed with current water and fuel.

WATER AND WETLAND EDIBLE PLANTS

Freshwater, marsh, tidal and marine foods. Correct ID does not make dirty water safe.

WATERCRESS

AQUATIC FOOD



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Nasturtium officinale

IDENTIFY: Creeping hollow stems; pinnate leaves with a larger rounded terminal leaflet; small white four-petaled flowers.

HABITAT / SEASON: Cold flowing springs and streams, often where nutrient-rich. Season: Cool seasons.

SURVIVAL USE: Tender tops are documented food and are usually cooked in survival settings.

CAUTION: Raw watercress can carry liver flukes and sewage pathogens. Avoid downstream of livestock, roads or settlements.

LOOK-ALIKES: Water hemlock has divided leaves and umbrella flowers; never rely on habitat alone.

TASKS: food green

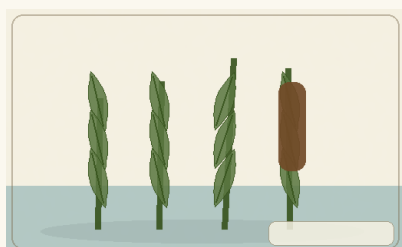
Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

11

CATTAILS

AQUATIC FOOD



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Typha spp.

IDENTIFY: Tall flat strap leaves; dense brown cylindrical female flower spike below a narrower male section.

HABITAT / SEASON: Marshes, pond edges, slow channels and wet ditches. Season: Shoots spring; pollen early summer; rhizomes year-round where lawful.

SURVIVAL USE: Documented food parts include young inner shoots, pollen and processed rhizome starch. Leaves make mats, baskets and thatch; seed down can bulk tinder.

CAUTION: Water can concentrate sewage, metals and parasites. Raw rhizome requires correct processing; avoid contaminated marshes.

LOOK-ALIKES: Yellow flag iris has sword leaves and showy flowers but no brown cattail head.

TASKS: food shoot, food starch, basketry, thatch, tinder

Verified images: POWO

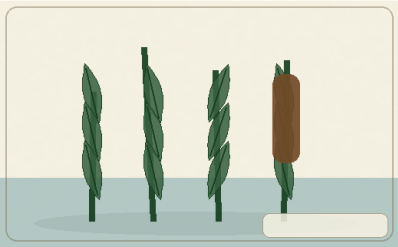
iNaturalist

12

WATER AND WETLAND EDIBLE PLANTS

Freshwater, marsh, tidal and marine foods. Correct ID does not make dirty water safe.

SACRED LOTUS
AQUATIC FOOD



Nelumbo nucifera

IDENTIFY: Large circular peltate leaves usually rising above water; large pink-white flowers; showerhead seed pods.

HABITAT / SEASON: Warm Asian lakes, ponds, floodplains and cultivated wetlands. Season: Rhizomes, seeds and shoots seasonal.

SURVIVAL USE: Rhizomes, seeds and young stems are documented foods after cooking; fibers have craft use.
 CAUTION: Wetland contamination and deep mud are major hazards. Raw parts can carry parasites.
 LOOK-ALIKES: Water lily leaves have a slit and usually float.
 TASKS: food starch, food seed, fiber

Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

13

AQUATIC HARVEST SCREEN

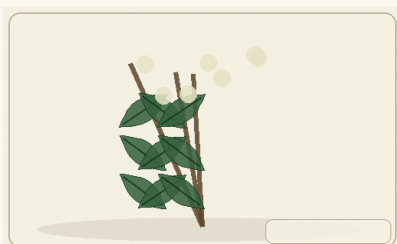
Check five separate questions: Is the species correct? Is the plant part edible? Is the water free of sewage, mining or farm runoff? Are parasites or harmful algal blooms plausible? Is entry and exit from the water safe? A “yes” to the plant and a “no” to the water still means do not eat.

MEDICINAL AND TRADITIONAL-USE PLANTS

Traditional and historical uses only — no dosing, diagnosis or treatment claims.

YARROW

TRADITIONAL-USE



Achillea millefolium

IDENTIFY: Aromatic finely divided leaves; flat clusters of small white to pink flower heads.

Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

HABITAT / SEASON: Dry openings, trails, grassland, shore gravel and disturbed soil. Season: Summer through fall.

SURVIVAL USE: Documented traditional external uses include washes and aromatic preparations; dry flower heads make light tinder.

CAUTION: Possible allergy, pregnancy and anticoagulant concerns. Not a substitute for wound cleaning or medical care.

LOOK-ALIKES: Poison hemlock is much taller with hollow purple-spotted stems and true umbels.

TASKS: medicine, tinder

Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

14

MUGWORTS

TRADITIONAL-USE



Artemisia vulgaris complex

IDENTIFY: Aromatic deeply lobed leaves, commonly silvery beneath; small inconspicuous flower heads.

Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

HABITAT / SEASON: Disturbed ground, steppe, forest edges and riverbanks. Season: Summer through fall.

SURVIVAL USE: Documented traditional uses include aromatic smoke and digestive preparations; dry stalks can be tinder.

CAUTION: Avoid internal use during pregnancy or with seizure disorders. Species identification is difficult.

LOOK-ALIKES: Ragweeds lack the silvery underside and have different flowers.

TASKS: medicine, tinder

Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

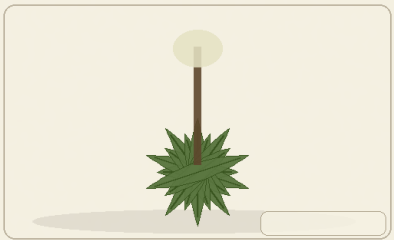
15

MEDICINAL AND TRADITIONAL-USE PLANTS

Traditional and historical uses only — no dosing, diagnosis or treatment claims.

BROADLEAF AND RIBWORT PLANTAINS

TRADITIONAL-USE



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Plantago major / *P. lanceolata*

IDENTIFY: Basal rosette with strong parallel ribs; leafless spikes of tiny flowers and seeds.

HABITAT / SEASON: Trails, camps, meadows and disturbed soil. Season: Spring through fall.

SURVIVAL USE: Young leaves and seeds are documented food; clean leaves have traditional external use on minor irritation.
 CAUTION: Do not put dirty leaves on open wounds. Seeds swell with water and can obstruct if taken dry in quantity.
 LOOK-ALIKES: Docks have netted veins; plantain ribs run from the base.
 TASKS: food green, medicine

Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

16

MEDICINAL RESTRAINT

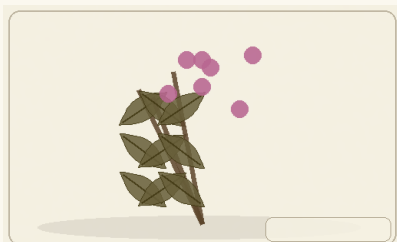
A plant can be culturally important and pharmacologically active yet still be the wrong survival choice. Unknown concentration, dehydration, pregnancy, allergies, chronic illness and medicine interactions can turn a traditional remedy into a second emergency.

POISONOUS PLANTS AND DANGEROUS LOOK-ALIKES

High-consequence species to learn before gathering starts.

MONKSHOODS

POISON — AVOID



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Aconitum spp.

IDENTIFY: Deeply divided palmate leaves; blue, purple, yellow or white hood-shaped flowers.

HABITAT / SEASON: Moist mountain meadows, streambanks and cool forest. Season: Summer.

SURVIVAL USE: No food or field medicinal use.

CAUTION: All parts contain potent aconitine-type alkaloids; ingestion can cause fatal heart and nerve effects.

LOOK-ALIKES: Larkspurs have a rear spur and are also toxic.

TASKS: poison

Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

17

FALSE HELLEBORES

POISON — AVOID



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Veratrum spp.

IDENTIFY: Tall herb with broad strongly pleated leaves around a stout stem and branched greenish flower clusters.

HABITAT / SEASON: Wet meadows, seeps and stream margins in temperate and montane regions. Season: Spring through summer.

SURVIVAL USE: No food use.

CAUTION: All parts are poisonous and may cause vomiting, slow heart rate, low blood pressure and collapse.

LOOK-ALIKES: Young shoots can resemble wild leek but lack onion odor and have broad pleated leaves.

TASKS: poison

Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

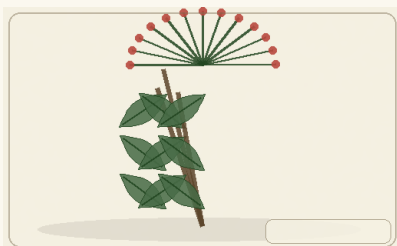
18

POISONOUS PLANTS AND DANGEROUS LOOK-ALIKES

High-consequence species to learn before gathering starts.

WATER HEMLOCKS

POISON — AVOID



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Cicuta spp.

IDENTIFY: Wetland perennial with divided leaves, white umbrella flower clusters and thick chambered rootstocks.

HABITAT / SEASON: Marshes, wet meadows, stream edges and ditches across the northern hemisphere. Season: Spring through fall.

SURVIVAL USE: No survival use. Make wetland root gathering a prohibited activity unless a qualified botanist is present.

CAUTION: Extremely poisonous; small amounts, especially roots, can cause violent seizures and death.

LOOK-ALIKES: Angelica, cow parsnip and other Apiaceae can look similar. Never taste to decide.

TASKS: poison

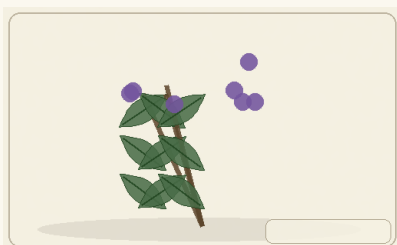
Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

19

FOXGLOVE

POISON — AVOID



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Digitalis purpurea

IDENTIFY: Tall spike of purple, pink or white tubular flowers with spotted throats; soft wrinkled basal leaves.

HABITAT / SEASON: Roadsides, clearings, old farms and disturbed temperate ground. Season: Late spring through summer.

SURVIVAL USE: No field medicinal use.

CAUTION: All parts contain potent cardiac glycosides and can cause life-threatening rhythm disturbances.

LOOK-ALIKES: First-year rosettes can resemble comfrey or mullein.

TASKS: poison

Verified images: POWO

iNaturalist

20

SURVIVAL TASK MATRIX

Choose the least destructive plant that meets the job. A material that works poorly but is abundant may beat the perfect rare species.

TASK	BEST REGIONAL CANDIDATES IN THIS GUIDE	FIELD DECISION
Bow / spring wood	Asian bamboos, Wild walnuts, Asian chestnuts	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Arrow or dart shaft	Asian bamboos, Dogwoods	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Bow-drill hearth	No reliable candidate among the priority profiles.	Use a different technology or carried tool; do not force unsuitable plant material.
Bow-drill spindle	No reliable candidate among the priority profiles.	Use a different technology or carried tool; do not force unsuitable plant material.
Tinder	Deodar cedar, Himalayan blue pine, Cattails, Yarrow	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Fuel / coals	Sal, Deodar cedar, Himalayan blue pine, Asian chestnuts	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Cordage / fiber	Stinging nettle	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Basket / mat	Cattails	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Container / wrap	Asian bamboos	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Fruit food	Asian persimmons	Verify part, maturity and preparation.
Green food	Stinging nettle, Wild onions and garlic, Watercress, Broadleaf and ribwort plantains	Verify part, maturity and preparation.
Seed / nut	Himalayan blue pine, Sacred lotus	Verify part, maturity and preparation.
Root / starch	Cattails, Sacred lotus	Verify part, maturity and preparation.
Traditional-use	Yarrow, Mugworts, Broadleaf and ribwort plantains	Documented use only; no field dosing.

SEASONAL OPERATING RHYTHM

PHASE	PRIMARY OPPORTUNITY	PRIMARY RISK
Early growth	Shoots, greens, flowers, sap and easy bark identification.	Toxic shoots and bulbs are hardest to separate before flowering.
Peak growth	Maximum leaf and flower information; fiber plants mature.	Heat, insects, sap and water contamination.
Fruit / seed	Highest food density; nuts, berries, pods, grains and tubers.	Mold, wildlife encounters and unripe or toxic fruit.
Dormant / dry	Wood, bark, evergreen leaves, persistent fruit and roots.	Fewer diagnostic traits; overharvest of stored underground parts.

SOURCES, IMAGE VERIFICATION AND EMERGENCY

Every profile links to current taxonomic and photograph searches. Treat community photographs as evidence to compare, not as a final authority.

1. 2023 USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map
USDA Agricultural Research Service — hardiness-zone reference
<https://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/>

2. Plants of the World Online
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew — taxonomy, distribution and images
<https://powo.science.kew.org/>

3. World Flora Online
World Flora Online Consortium — global plant taxonomy
<https://www.worldfloraonline.org/>

4. Global Biodiversity Information Facility
GBIF Secretariat — occurrence records and licensed media
<https://www.gbif.org/>

5. World Checklist of Useful Plant Species
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew — documented plant uses
<https://kew.iro.bl.uk/concern/datasets/7243d727-e28d-419d-a8f7-9ebef5b9e03e>

6. Poison Control
National Capital Poison Center — poisoning first-response guidance
<https://www.poison.org/>

7. WHO Monographs on Selected Medicinal Plants
World Health Organization — medicinal-plant safety and monographs
<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9241545178>

8. Flora of China
Missouri Botanical Garden and Harvard University Herbaria — East and Central Asian scientific flora
http://www.efloras.org/flora_page.aspx?flora_id=2

9. Flora of Pakistan
University of Karachi / eFloras — Himalayan and South Asian flora
http://www.efloras.org/flora_page.aspx?flora_id=5

SUSPECTED POISONING

Stop exposure. Remove material from the mouth and rinse. Do not induce vomiting unless directed. Save a sample or clear photographs. Contact local emergency services or a poison center. Monitor airway, breathing and consciousness.

PUBLICATION LIMITS

Regional lists are representative, not exhaustive. Species ranges, names, laws and preparation practices change. Local floras, land managers, Indigenous knowledge holders, poison centers and clinicians take precedence.