

EAST ASIAN SUBTROPICAL EVERGREEN FOREST PLANT SURVIVAL GUIDE

Asia • USDA-EQUIVALENT ZONES 8-11 • KÖPPEN Cfa / Cwa

LAND + WATER

REGIONAL HABITAT ILLUSTRATION — NOT AN ID PHOTO

USEFUL

EDIBLE

MEDICINAL

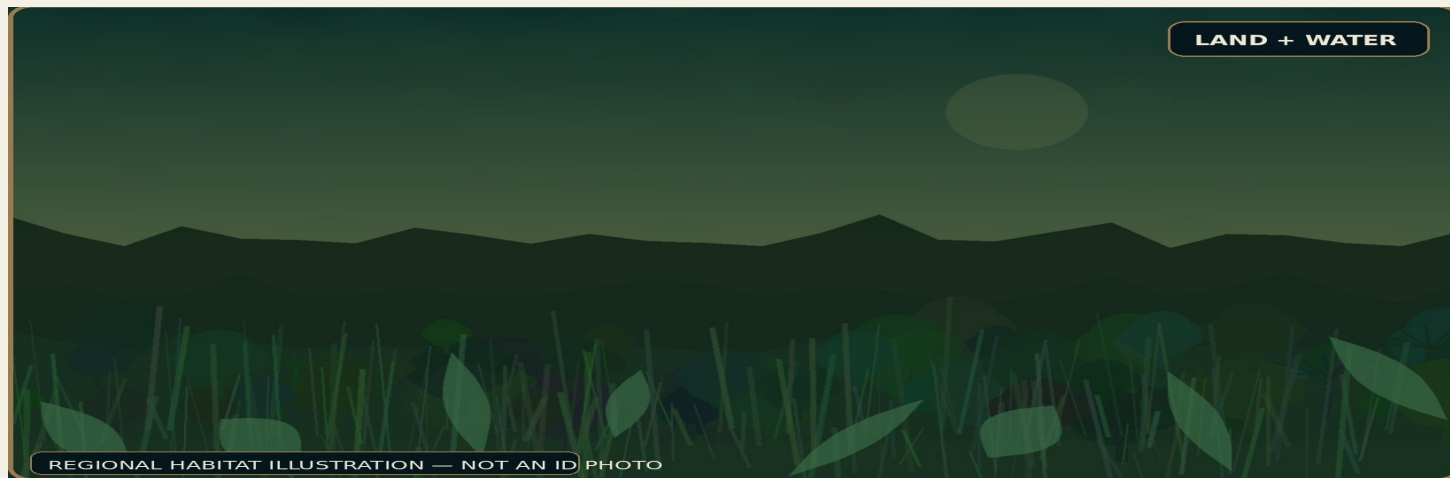
POISONOUS

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: 8-11 Köppen: Cfa / Cwa

Regional habitat: Evergreen broadleaf forest, bamboo, tea-country slope and wet 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

1. PLACE

Confirm continent, elevation, water regime, soil and disturbance.

2

2. FORM

Tree, shrub, vine, herb, grass, sedge, palm, fern, succulent or aquatic.

3

3. LEAF

Arrangement, veins, edge, hairs, glands, sap, odor and underside.

4

4. STEM / BARK

Thorns, pith, nodes, buds, lenticels, fibers, latex and branching.

5

5. FLOWER / FRUIT

Petal count, inflorescence, fruit attachment, seed and maturity.

6

6. EXCLUDE

Name every dangerous look-alike and explain why it is different.

7

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

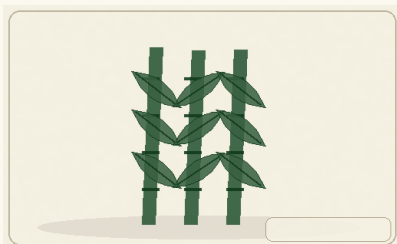
1. Deadfall and shed bark.
2. Abundant annual greens and fruit.
3. Pruned shoots and leaves.
4. Small stems from common thickets.
5. Roots, bark and whole plants only with permission and no safer substitute.

USEFUL PLANTS FOR TOOLS, FIRE AND SHELTER

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

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

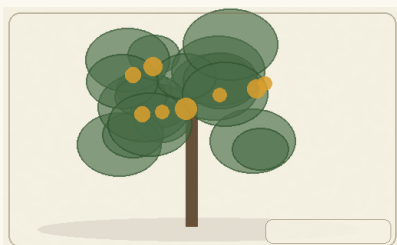
Verified images: POWO

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1

PAPER MULBERRY

USEFUL MATERIAL



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Broussonetia papyrifera

IDENTIFY: Variable lobed rough leaves; milky sap; orange-red aggregate female fruits.

HABITAT / SEASON: East and Southeast Asian forest edge, villages and disturbed ground; introduced widely. Season: Bark and wood year-round; fruit seasonal.

SURVIVAL USE: Inner bark has famous barkcloth, cordage and paper uses; straight shoots make arrow shafts; ripe fruit is edible but fragile.

CAUTION: Milky sap can irritate and fruit spoils quickly. Trees may be invasive.

LOOK-ALIKES: Mulberries have similar fruit but usually less variable leaves and no dense orange hairs.

TASKS: cordage, barkcloth, arrow shaft, food fruit

Verified images: POWO

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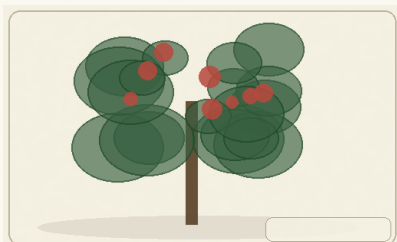
2

USEFUL PLANTS FOR TOOLS, FIRE AND SHELTER

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

TEAK

USEFUL MATERIAL



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Tectona grandis

IDENTIFY: Very large opposite rough leaves; small white flower panicles; round fruit in an inflated papery calyx.

HABITAT / SEASON: South and Southeast Asian seasonal forest. Season: Wood year-round; leaves growing season.

SURVIVAL USE: Durable water-resistant wood for tools, containers, paddles and construction; dry leaves can bulk tinder.

CAUTION: Dust can cause dermatitis; old planted trees may be owned.

LOOK-ALIKES: Gmelina has opposite leaves but different fruit and smoother leaf texture.

TASKS: construction, tools, container, tinder

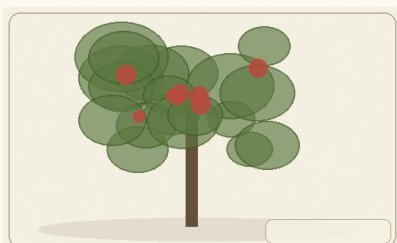
Verified images: POWO

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BANYAN AND STRANGLER FIGS

USEFUL MATERIAL



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Ficus benghalensis and related spp.

IDENTIFY: Milky latex; alternate simple leaves; aerial roots from branches; fig fruits with tiny internal flowers.

HABITAT / SEASON: South Asian and tropical forest, village groves and riverbanks. Season: Fruit varies; roots and fiber year-round.

SURVIVAL USE: Aerial roots and bark fiber provide cordage; dry roots and wood make light friction-fire materials; ripe figs of known species feed people and wildlife.

CAUTION: Milky latex irritates. Many figs are edible but some are poor; sacred or owned trees must not be damaged.

LOOK-ALIKES: Mulberries have external aggregate fruit, not enclosed figs.

TASKS: cordage, bow drill board, food fruit

Verified images: POWO

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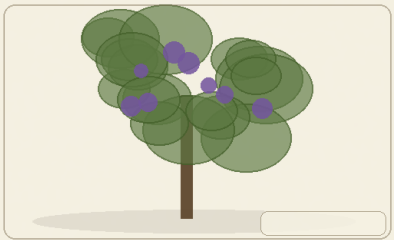
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USEFUL PLANTS FOR TOOLS, FIRE AND SHELTER

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

ASHES

USEFUL MATERIAL



Fraxinus spp.

IDENTIFY: Opposite branching; compound leaves; one-seeded winged keys in clusters.

HABITAT / SEASON: Temperate hardwood forest, floodplain and woodland edge. Season: Wood year-round; leaves growing season.

SURVIVAL USE: Elastic, shock-resistant wood for bows, spear shafts, wedges, handles and snowshoe frames.
CAUTION: Emerald ash borer and conservation rules may restrict cutting. Confirm opposite branching.
LOOK-ALIKES: Boxelder has opposite compound leaves but maple-type paired keys.
TASKS: bow wood, arrow shaft, handles, wedges

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MATERIAL SELECTION SCREEN

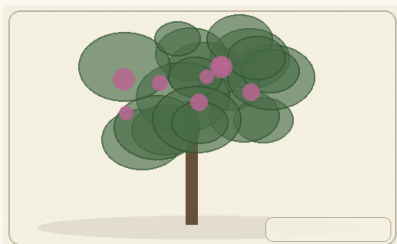
Before cutting, test straightness, grain, dryness, hidden rot, sap or smoke toxicity, and whether the species is protected. Match the material to the load: springy bow wood, straight shaft wood, soft dry hearth board, harder spindle, fibrous cordage, or resin-free cooking fuel.

LAND-BASED EDIBLE PLANTS

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

ASIAN PERSIMMONS

LAND FOOD



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

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

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CHINESE JUJUBE

LAND FOOD



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Ziziphus jujuba

IDENTIFY: Zigzag twigs with paired thorns; glossy three-veined leaves; small red-brown drupes.

HABITAT / SEASON: Warm temperate and dry Asian valleys, orchards and scrub. Season: Fruit late summer-fall.

SURVIVAL USE: Ripe fruit is documented food fresh or dried; hard wood makes handles and pegs.

CAUTION: Unripe fruit is astringent; ownership and pesticide exposure matter.

LOOK-ALIKES: Other *Ziziphus* species vary in fruit size and thorn form.

TASKS: food fruit, handles, pegs

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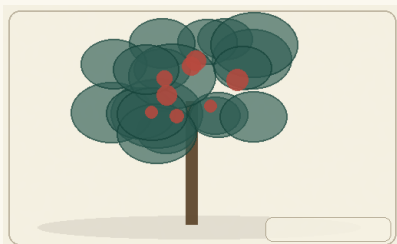
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LAND-BASED EDIBLE PLANTS

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

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

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WILD ONIONS AND GARLIC

LAND FOOD



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

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

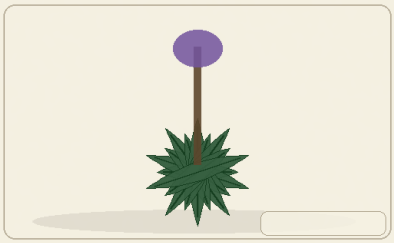
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LAND-BASED EDIBLE PLANTS

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

COMMON PURSLANE
LAND FOOD



Portulaca oleracea

IDENTIFY: Low reddish succulent stems; smooth fleshy leaves; tiny yellow flowers; clear sap.

HABITAT / SEASON: Disturbed warm ground, gardens, river deposits and camp edges worldwide. Season: Warm growing season.

SURVIVAL USE: Young leaves and stems are documented food and water-rich greens.
 CAUTION: High oxalate content; avoid large amounts with kidney disease and avoid contaminated ground.
 LOOK-ALIKES: Spurge often exude milky sap and are unsafe.
 TASKS: food green

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FOOD HARVEST SCREEN

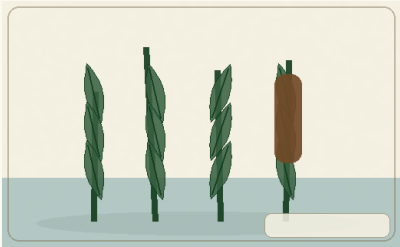
Confirm species, plant part and maturity. Check whether cooking, leaching, peeling, fermenting or repeated water changes are required. Reject mold, animal contamination, roadside plants, chemically treated ground and any food whose safe preparation cannot be completed with current water and fuel.

WATER AND WETLAND EDIBLE PLANTS

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

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

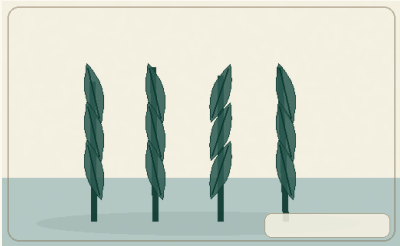
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WATER CHESTNUT

AQUATIC FOOD



Eleocharis dulcis

IDENTIFY: Leafless-looking round green stems in clumps; small brown spikelets; underground dark corms.

HABITAT / SEASON: Warm freshwater marshes, paddies and pond margins. Season: Corms late season.

SURVIVAL USE: Clean cooked corms are documented food.
 CAUTION: Raw corms can carry parasites and wetlands may be contaminated. Confirm sedge and corm structure.
 LOOK-ALIKES: Spike-rush species without large edible corms are common.
 TASKS: food tuber

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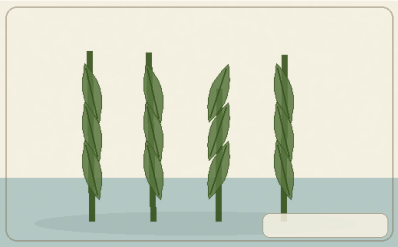
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WATER AND WETLAND EDIBLE PLANTS

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

WATER SPINACH

AQUATIC FOOD



Ipomoea aquatica

IDENTIFY: Hollow creeping stems; arrow to lance leaves; pale morning-glory flowers.

HABITAT / SEASON: Warm freshwater ditches, ponds and slow rivers; native or invasive. Season: Warm season.

SURVIVAL USE: Tender shoots are a documented cooked green.

CAUTION: Raw plants can carry parasites and sewage pathogens; avoid polluted water and check invasive-species law.

LOOK-ALIKES: Water hemlock has divided leaves and umbels, not morning-glory flowers.

TASKS: food green

Verified images: POWO

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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.

GINGER

TRADITIONAL-USE



Zingiber officinale

IDENTIFY: Narrow leaves on pseudostems; thick aromatic branching rhizome; cone-like flower spike from the ground.

Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

HABITAT / SEASON: Tropical Asian cultivation and moist disturbed ground. Season: Rhizomes year-round.

SURVIVAL USE: Known rhizomes are documented food, seasoning and traditional-use plant.

CAUTION: Do not dig unknown ginger-family plants. Large medicinal doses can interact with anticoagulants.

LOOK-ALIKES: Wild gingers and turmeric differ in leaf width, scent and flowers.

TASKS: seasoning, medicine

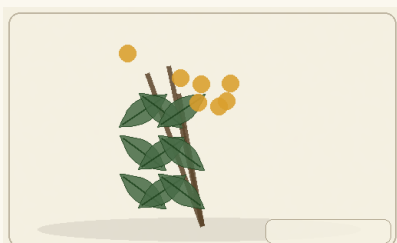
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TURMERIC

TRADITIONAL-USE



Curcuma longa

IDENTIFY: Large lance leaves from an underground orange rhizome; pale flower spike with colored bracts.

Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

HABITAT / SEASON: South and Southeast Asian cultivation and disturbed humid ground. Season: Rhizomes late season.

SURVIVAL USE: Known rhizomes are documented spice, dye and traditional-use material.

CAUTION: Wild ginger relatives can look similar and some are not edible. Concentrated medicinal dosing is not advised.

LOOK-ALIKES: Zingiber and Curcuma species differ in flower spike and rhizome color.

TASKS: seasoning, dye, medicine

Verified images: POWO

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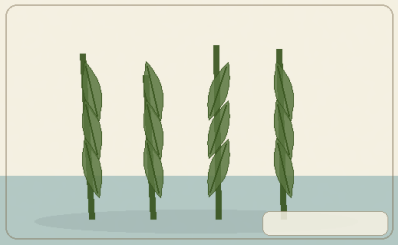
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MEDICINAL AND TRADITIONAL-USE PLANTS

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

GOTU KOLA

TRADITIONAL-USE



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Centella asiatica

IDENTIFY: Creeping herb with round kidney-shaped leaves on long stalks and tiny clustered flowers at nodes.

HABITAT / SEASON: Tropical wet ground, ditches, rice margins and streambanks. Season: Year-round in warm climates.

SURVIVAL USE: Leaves are documented food and traditional-use plant, usually cooked or eaten from clean cultivation.

CAUTION: Wild plants from wet ground may carry parasites or pollutants. Concentrated medicinal use can affect liver and medicines.

LOOK-ALIKES: Hydrocotyle pennyworts have similar round leaves and require flower examination.

TASKS: food green, medicine

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MEDICINAL RESTRAINT

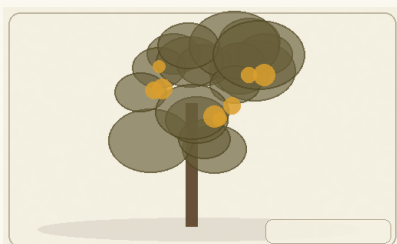
A plant can be culturally important and pharmacologically active yet still be the wrong survival choice. Unknown concentration, dehydration, pregnancy, allergies, chronic illness and medicine interactions can turn a traditional remedy into a second emergency.

POISONOUS PLANTS AND DANGEROUS LOOK-ALIKES

High-consequence species to learn before gathering starts.

CERBERA / SUICIDE TREE

POISON — AVOID



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Cerbera odollam and related spp.

IDENTIFY: Glossy narrow leaves clustered at twig ends; white five-petaled flowers; mango-like green fruit; milky sap.

HABITAT / SEASON: South and Southeast Asian coasts, mangroves and river edges. Season: Year-round.

SURVIVAL USE: No food use.

CAUTION: Seeds contain potent cardiac glycosides and can be fatal; sap is irritating.

LOOK-ALIKES: Sea mango relatives and edible mangoes differ but fruit similarity is dangerous.

TASKS: poison

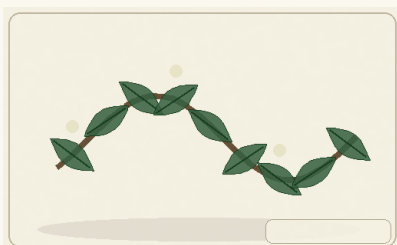
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FLAME LILY

POISON — AVOID



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Gloriosa superba

IDENTIFY: Climbing herb with tendril-like leaf tips and red-yellow reflexed flame-shaped flowers; underground tubers.

HABITAT / SEASON: African and Asian tropical grassland, thicket and forest edge. Season: Wet season.

SURVIVAL USE: No food or medicine use.

CAUTION: All parts, especially tubers and seeds, contain colchicine-type toxins and can be fatal.

LOOK-ALIKES: Edible yams twine differently and have inconspicuous flowers.

TASKS: poison

Verified images: POWO

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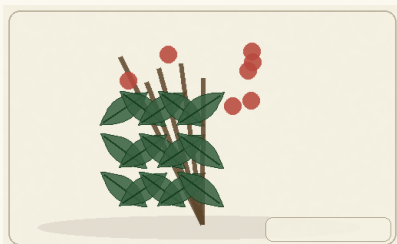
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POISONOUS PLANTS AND DANGEROUS LOOK-ALIKES

High-consequence species to learn before gathering starts.

CASTOR BEAN

POISON — AVOID



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Ricinus communis

IDENTIFY: Large star-shaped palmately lobed leaves; spiny capsules; glossy mottled seeds.

HABITAT / SEASON: Warm disturbed ground, riverbanks and tropical/subtropical waste areas. Season: Growing season; seeds seasonal.

SURVIVAL USE: No survival food or medicine use. Oil extraction is industrial, not a field process.

CAUTION: Chewed seeds can release ricin and cause severe or fatal poisoning.

LOOK-ALIKES: *Jatropha* has similar lobed leaves but different fruit; it is also toxic.

TASKS: poison

Verified images: POWO

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DATURAS / THORN APPLES

POISON — AVOID



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Datura spp.

IDENTIFY: Large foul-smelling leaves; upright trumpet flowers; spiny egg-shaped capsules.

HABITAT / SEASON: Disturbed warm ground, dry riverbeds and fields worldwide. Season: Summer-fall.

SURVIVAL USE: No use.

CAUTION: All parts contain dangerous tropane alkaloids causing delirium, overheating, seizures and death.

LOOK-ALIKES: *Brugmansia* has hanging trumpets on woody shrubs and is also toxic.

TASKS: poison

Verified images: POWO

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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, Ashes, Asian chestnuts	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Arrow or dart shaft	Asian bamboos, Paper mulberry, Ashes	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Bow-drill hearth	Banyan and strangler figs	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Bow-drill spindle	No reliable candidate among the priority profiles.	Use a different technology or carried tool; do not force unsuitable plant material.
Tinder	Teak	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Fuel / coals	Asian chestnuts	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Cordage / fiber	Paper mulberry, Banyan and strangler figs	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Basket / mat	No reliable candidate among the priority profiles.	Use a different technology or carried tool; do not force unsuitable plant material.
Container / wrap	Asian bamboos, Teak	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Fruit food	Paper mulberry, Banyan and strangler figs, Asian persimmons, Chinese jujube	Verify part, maturity and preparation.
Green food	Wild onions and garlic, Common purslane, Water spinach, Gotu kola	Verify part, maturity and preparation.
Seed / nut	Sacred lotus	Verify part, maturity and preparation.
Root / starch	Sacred lotus	Verify part, maturity and preparation.
Traditional-use	Ginger, Turmeric, Gotu kola	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.