

SOUTHEAST ASIAN MONTANE & CLOUD FOREST PLANT SURVIVAL GUIDE

Asia • USDA-EQUIVALENT ZONES 8-11 • KÖPPEN Cfb / Cwb

LAND + WATER

REGIONAL HABITAT ILLUSTRATION — NOT AN ID PHOTO

USEFUL

EDIBLE

MEDICINAL

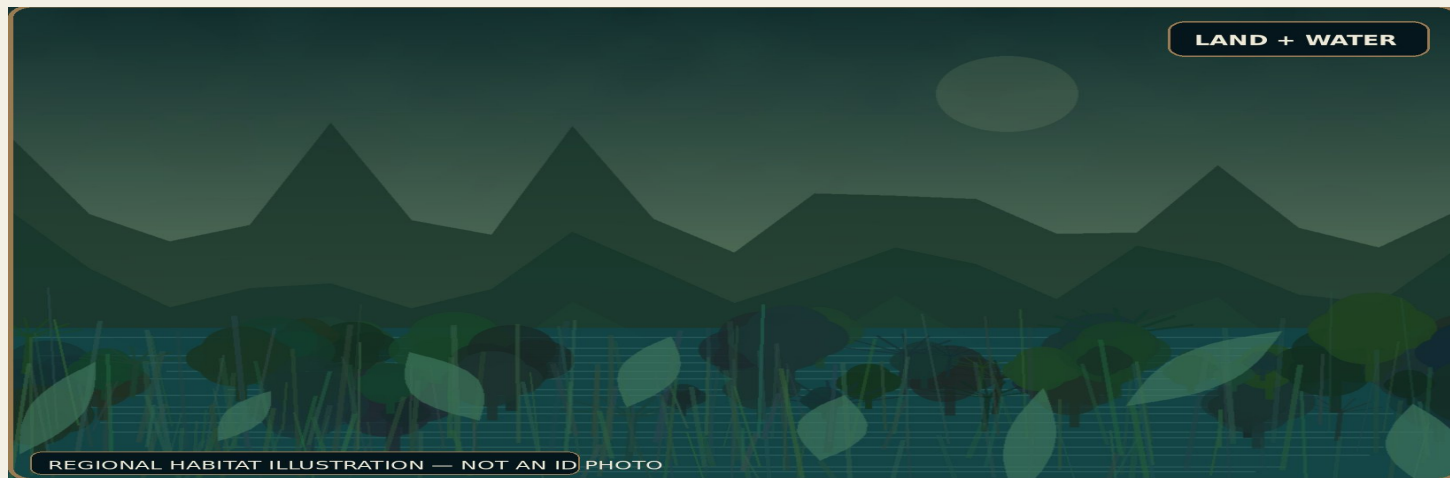
POISONOUS

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: Cfb / Cwb

Regional habitat: Montane evergreen forest, cloud forest, bamboo and mossy ridge

Zone warning: hardiness describes winter minimum temperature only; rainfall, heat, soils, fire, elevation and seasonality still control the flora.

FIELD PRIORITIES

- In species-rich forest, require flower, fruit or several vegetative traits; leaf shape alone is almost never enough.
- 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

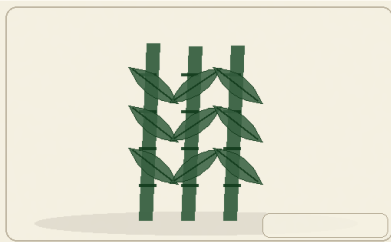
1. Deadfall and shed bark.
2. Abundant annual greens and fruit.
3. Pruned shoots and leaves.
4. Small stems from common thickets.
5. Roots, bark and whole plants only with permission and no safer substitute.

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

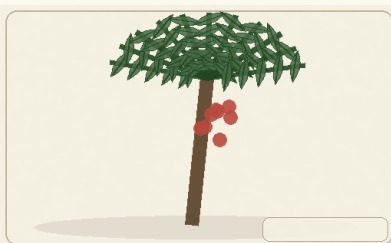
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RATTAN PALMS

USEFUL MATERIAL



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Calamoideae climbing palms

IDENTIFY: Long climbing palm stems with pinnate leaves and backward-pointing hooks or flagella.

HABITAT / SEASON: Southeast Asian and African humid forest. Season: Stems year-round; fruit seasonal.

SURVIVAL USE: Exceptionally strong flexible cane for lashings, baskets, traps, pack frames and bow backing.

CAUTION: Hooks tear skin and eyes. Some fruits are irritant or very sour; species identification is difficult.

LOOK-ALIKES: Lianas lack palm leaf bases and specialized climbing whips.

TASKS: cordage, basketry, trap, pack frame

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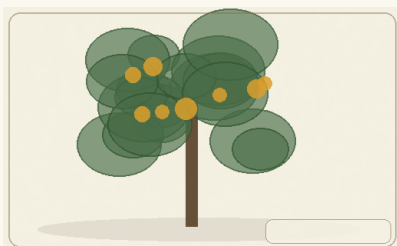
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USEFUL PLANTS FOR TOOLS, FIRE AND SHELTER

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

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

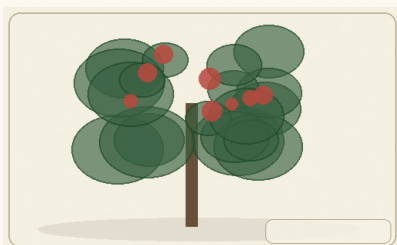
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TEAK

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

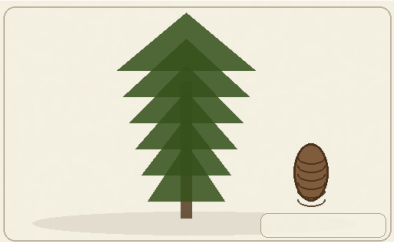
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USEFUL PLANTS FOR TOOLS, FIRE AND SHELTER

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

DEODAR CEDAR
USEFUL MATERIAL



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

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MATERIAL SELECTION SCREEN

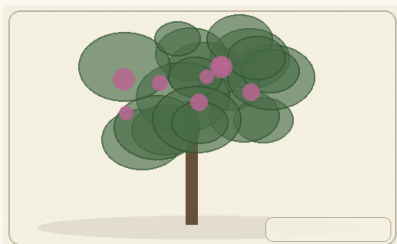
Before cutting, test straightness, grain, dryness, hidden rot, sap or smoke toxicity, and whether the species is protected. Match the material to the load: springy bow wood, straight shaft wood, soft dry hearth board, harder spindle, fibrous cordage, or resin-free cooking fuel.

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

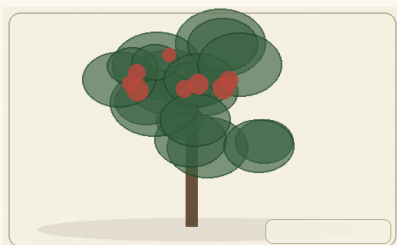
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WILD WALNUTS

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

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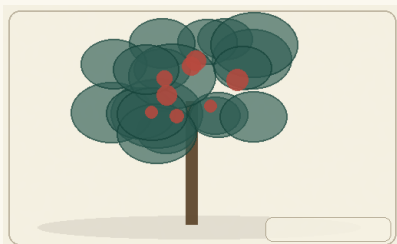
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LAND-BASED EDIBLE PLANTS

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

Verified images: POWO

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STINGING NETTLE

LAND FOOD



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

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

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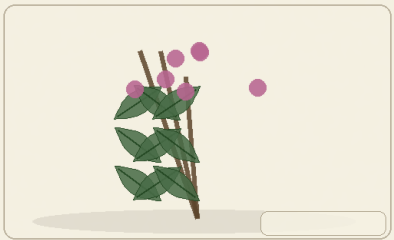
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LAND-BASED EDIBLE PLANTS

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

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

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FOOD HARVEST SCREEN

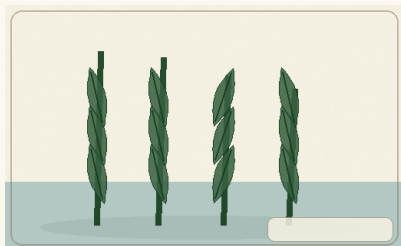
Confirm species, plant part and maturity. Check whether cooking, leaching, peeling, fermenting or repeated water changes are required. Reject mold, animal contamination, roadside plants, chemically treated ground and any food whose safe preparation cannot be completed with current water and fuel.

WATER AND WETLAND EDIBLE PLANTS

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

WATERCRESS

AQUATIC FOOD



Nasturtium officinale

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

Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

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

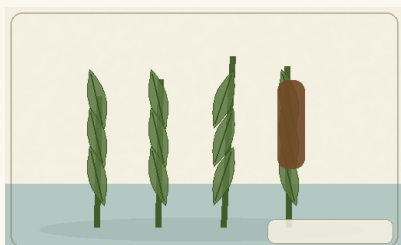
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CATTAILS

AQUATIC FOOD



Typha spp.

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

Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

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

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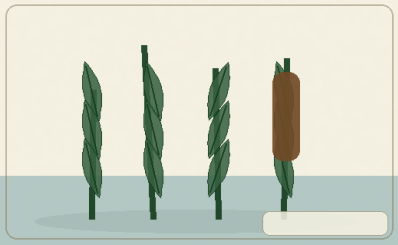
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WATER AND WETLAND EDIBLE PLANTS

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

SACRED LOTUS

AQUATIC FOOD



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

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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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

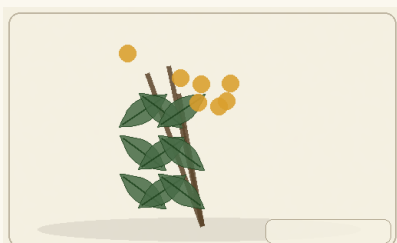
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TURMERIC

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

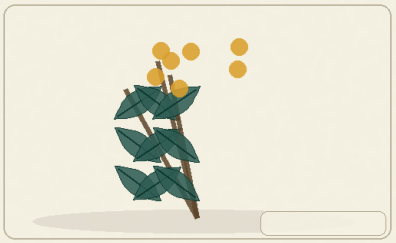
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MEDICINAL AND TRADITIONAL-USE PLANTS

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

MUGWORTS
TRADITIONAL-USE



Artemisia vulgaris complex

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

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

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MEDICINAL RESTRAINT

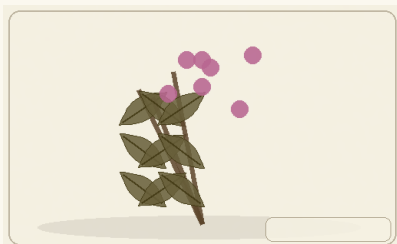
A plant can be culturally important and pharmacologically active yet still be the wrong survival choice. Unknown concentration, dehydration, pregnancy, allergies, chronic illness and medicine interactions can turn a traditional remedy into a second emergency.

POISONOUS PLANTS AND DANGEROUS LOOK-ALIKES

High-consequence species to learn before gathering starts.

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

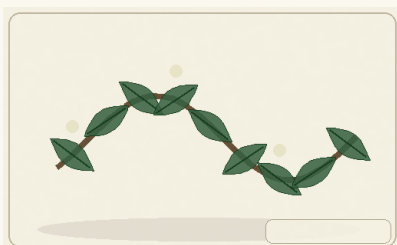
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FLAME LILY

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

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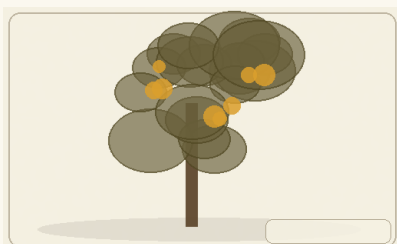
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POISONOUS PLANTS AND DANGEROUS LOOK-ALIKES

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

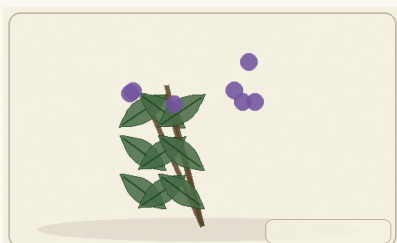
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FOXGLOVE

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

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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, Wild walnuts, Asian chestnuts	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Arrow or dart shaft	Asian bamboos, Paper mulberry	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	Teak, Deodar cedar, Cattails, Mugworts	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Fuel / coals	Deodar cedar, Asian chestnuts	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Cordage / fiber	Rattan palms, Paper mulberry, Stinging nettle	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Basket / mat	Rattan palms, Cattails	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Container / wrap	Asian bamboos, Teak	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Fruit food	Paper mulberry, Asian persimmons	Verify part, maturity and preparation.
Green food	Stinging nettle, Wild onions and garlic, Watercress	Verify part, maturity and preparation.
Seed / nut	Sacred lotus	Verify part, maturity and preparation.
Root / starch	Cattails, Sacred lotus	Verify part, maturity and preparation.
Traditional-use	Ginger, Turmeric, Mugworts	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.