

EAST ASIAN TEMPERATE MIXED FOREST PLANT SURVIVAL GUIDE

Asia • USDA-EQUIVALENT ZONES 5-9 • KÖPPEN Dwa / Dwb / Cfa

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: 5-9 Köppen: Dwa / Dwb / Cfa

Regional habitat: Deciduous-conifer forest, river valley, wetland and mountain slope

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.

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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

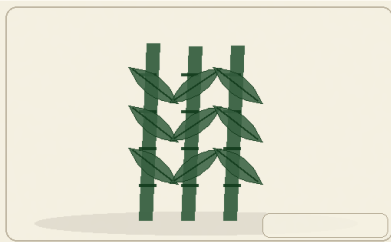
1. Deadfall and shed bark.
2. Abundant annual greens and fruit.
3. Pruned shoots and leaves.
4. Small stems from common thickets.
5. Roots, bark and whole plants only with permission and no safer substitute.

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

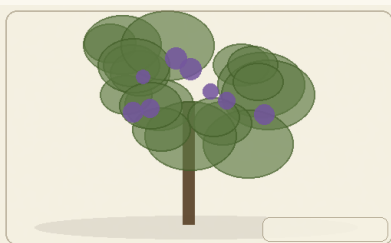
Verified images: POWO

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1

ASHES

USEFUL MATERIAL



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

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

Verified images: POWO

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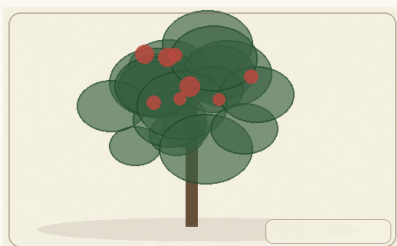
2

USEFUL PLANTS FOR TOOLS, FIRE AND SHELTER

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

OAKS

USEFUL MATERIAL



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Quercus spp.

IDENTIFY: Alternate leaves; acorns in cups; buds clustered at twig tips. Leaf lobes may be rounded or bristle-tipped.

HABITAT / SEASON: Temperate woodland, savanna, Mediterranean scrub and mountain forest. Season: Acorns fall; wood year-round.

SURVIVAL USE: Dense bow and handle wood, durable stakes and excellent coals. Acorns are high-energy food only after species-specific leaching to remove tannins.

CAUTION: Never eat raw bitter acorns in quantity. Moldy acorns are unsafe.

LOOK-ALIKES: Chestnuts have spiny burs and long toothed leaves.

TASKS: bow wood, handles, fuel, food nut

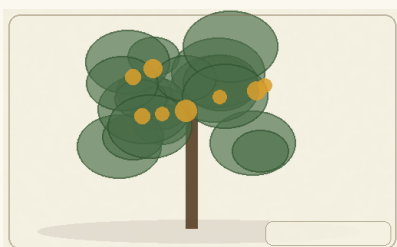
Verified images: POWO

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3

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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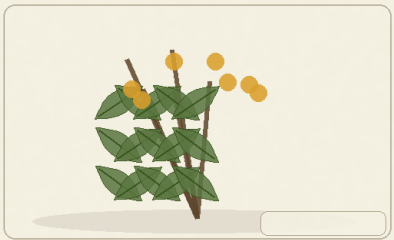
4

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

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MATERIAL SELECTION SCREEN

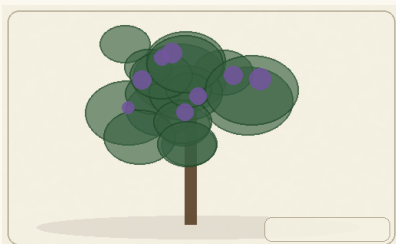
Before cutting, test straightness, grain, dryness, hidden rot, sap or smoke toxicity, and whether the species is protected. Match the material to the load: springy bow wood, straight shaft wood, soft dry hearth board, harder spindle, fibrous cordage, or resin-free cooking fuel.

LAND-BASED EDIBLE PLANTS

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

GINKGO

LAND FOOD



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Ginkgo biloba

IDENTIFY: Fan-shaped leaves with radiating veins; paired short shoots; fleshy foul-smelling seed coat around hard nut.

HABITAT / SEASON: East Asian temple groves, cities and rare native forest. Season: Seeds autumn; wood year-round.

SURVIVAL USE: Properly cooked kernels have documented food use; wood carves cleanly.

CAUTION: Raw or undercooked seeds contain toxins and repeated consumption is dangerous; fleshy coat irritates skin.

LOOK-ALIKES: No close common look-alike.

TASKS: food seed, carving

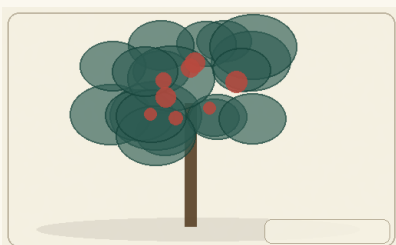
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ASIAN CHESTNUTS

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

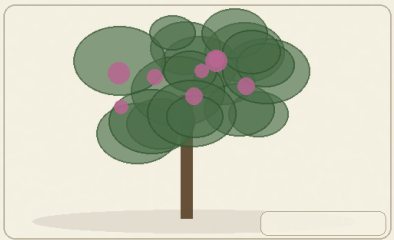
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LAND-BASED EDIBLE PLANTS

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.

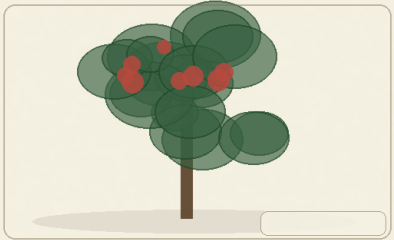
HABITAT / SEASON: East Asian forest edges, valleys and abandoned orchards. Season: Fruit autumn.

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
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WILD WALNUTS
 LAND FOOD



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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LAND-BASED EDIBLE PLANTS

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

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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FOOD HARVEST SCREEN

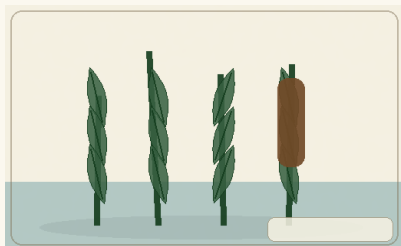
Confirm species, plant part and maturity. Check whether cooking, leaching, peeling, fermenting or repeated water changes are required. Reject mold, animal contamination, roadside plants, chemically treated ground and any food whose safe preparation cannot be completed with current water and fuel.

WATER AND WETLAND EDIBLE PLANTS

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

SACRED LOTUS

AQUATIC FOOD



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

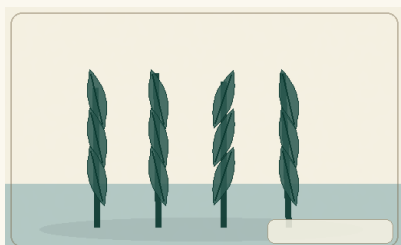
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WATER CHESTNUT

AQUATIC FOOD



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

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

Verified images: POWO

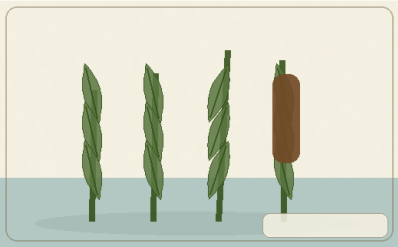
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WATER AND WETLAND EDIBLE PLANTS

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

CATTAILS
AQUATIC FOOD



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

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AQUATIC HARVEST SCREEN

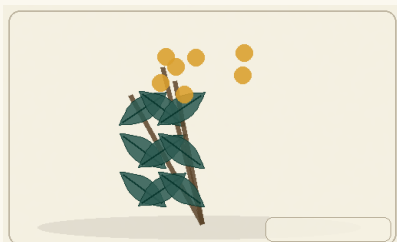
Check five separate questions: Is the species correct? Is the plant part edible? Is the water free of sewage, mining or farm runoff? Are parasites or harmful algal blooms plausible? Is entry and exit from the water safe? A “yes” to the plant and a “no” to the water still means do not eat.

MEDICINAL AND TRADITIONAL-USE PLANTS

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

MUGWORTS

TRADITIONAL-USE



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

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

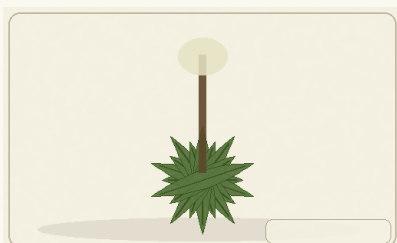
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BROADLEAF AND RIBWORT PLANTAINS

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

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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.

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

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MEDICINAL RESTRAINT

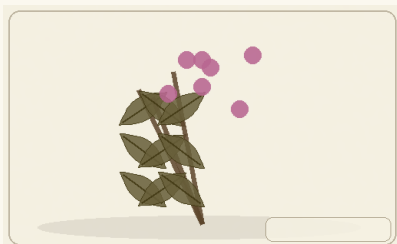
A plant can be culturally important and pharmacologically active yet still be the wrong survival choice. Unknown concentration, dehydration, pregnancy, allergies, chronic illness and medicine interactions can turn a traditional remedy into a second emergency.

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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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

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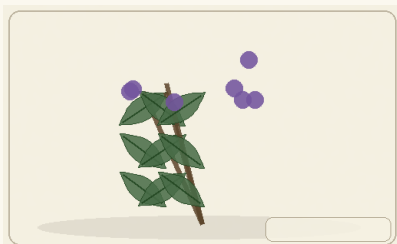
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POISONOUS PLANTS AND DANGEROUS LOOK-ALIKES

High-consequence species to learn before gathering starts.

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

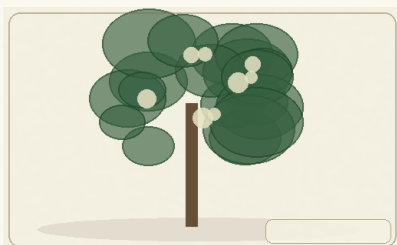
Verified images: POWO

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YEW TOXICITY PROFILE

POISON — AVOID



Stylized form diagram — not an identification photograph

Taxus spp.

IDENTIFY: Flat evergreen needles, reddish bark and red cup-like arils around hard seeds.

HABITAT / SEASON: Temperate and montane forest. Season: Year-round.

SURVIVAL USE: Material use only by experts; no food or medicine use.

CAUTION: Needles, bark and seeds contain dangerous taxines. Never burn in a cooking fire.

LOOK-ALIKES: Hemlocks and firs have cones and pale bands beneath needles.

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, Oaks, Asian chestnuts	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Arrow or dart shaft	Asian bamboos, Ashes, Paper mulberry, 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	Cattails, Mugworts, Yarrow	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Fuel / coals	Oaks, Asian chestnuts	Use dead, shed or pruned material first.
Cordage / fiber	Paper mulberry, 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	Paper mulberry, Asian persimmons	Verify part, maturity and preparation.
Green food	Stinging nettle, Broadleaf and ribwort plantains	Verify part, maturity and preparation.
Seed / nut	Ginkgo, Sacred lotus	Verify part, maturity and preparation.
Root / starch	Sacred lotus, Cattails	Verify part, maturity and preparation.
Traditional-use	Mugworts, Broadleaf and ribwort plantains, Yarrow	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.