

# Foraging Safely Checklist



## Before You Harvest

- ☐ **Correct Identification:** Triple-check the plant using at least 2-3 reliable sources (field guide, local expert, herb book, plant ID app).
- ☐ **Look-Alike Check:** Confirm the plant isn't a toxic look-alike.
- ☐ **Stage of Growth:** Harvest only when the plant is mature enough and during the correct time (not endangered seedlings or roots).
- ☐ **Abundance:** Make sure there's a thriving patch—the agreed upon "rule" is to never take more than 1/3 of an area. Since we are practicing Bioregional Herbalism, I suggest only taking what you will need for yourself & family for the coming year.

## Location Safety

- ☐ **Pollution Check:** Avoid roadsides, industrial areas, sprayed fields & lawns, or dog-walking areas.
- ☐ **Water Source:** Do not harvest near contaminated rivers, drainage ditches, or stagnant water.
- ☐ **Land Permission:** Make sure foraging is allowed (public land rules, private property). Ask the landowner before harvesting if you can harvest there and be sure to offer something in return. Gratitude or something tangible.

## Ecological Care

- ☐ **Leave Roots, Unless Ethical:** Only take leaves, flowers, stems or seeds (arial parts) unless root harvest is sustainable. For example, Echinacea roots should only be harvested if you have cultivated this plant as Echinacea is on the United Plant Savers At Risk List for some areas.
- ☐ **Harvest in Season:** Take plants at their peak for potency. Be sure to leave enough for regeneration.
- ☐ **Respect Wildlife:** Leave enough for pollinators, birds, animals and other foragers.
- ☐ **Leave No Trace:** Don't trample surrounding plants or disturb habitat. Leave no signs that you were there.

## Personal Safety

- ☐ **Allergies:** Know what allergies you have and what plants belong in those families. Many people have allergies to the Asteraceae/Compositae family (eg mugwort, chamomile, feverfew, wormwood)
- ☐ **Harvest Tools:** Gloves, scissors/knife, basket or paper bags
- ☐ **Dress According:** proper footwear, rain gear if needed, long sleeves to protect from bugs, scratches etc

## After Harvest

- ☐ **Preserve Promptly:** Dry, freeze, or make your remedy within 24 hours. If you choose to air dry, be sure herbs are crisp when touched then store in glass jars (This could take multiple weeks).
- ☐ **Label Immediately:** Write down the plant name + date and location harvested in a journal or notebook and label the herbs. Many herbs look completely different dry than they do fresh

If at anytime you second guess yourself or are unsure of something, remember this motto “*If in doubt, leave it out.*” Trust your instincts if it doesn't feel right. You can always harvest it another time. Do not harvest/ingest any herb you have not properly identified.

## Bonus: Foraging Safely Journal Prompts

- What is my intention for this foraging trip?
- What key features confirm this plant's identity?
- How did I ensure this harvest was sustainable?
- How will I honor and use this plant?
- What will I do differently next time?
- What plants are native to my area?
- Are there any endangered or at risk plants in your bioregion?
- What plants would you consider cultivating, growing in your own space?



