

A Guide to Selected Non-Timber Forest Products of the Hayfork Adaptive Management Area, Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers National Forests, California

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Contents

In Brief	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Introduction	1
Key to Summary Information for Included Species	8
Plant Descriptions	
<i>Least Sensitive to Harvest</i>	
<i>(exotics and weedy native annuals and perennials)</i>	11
Curly Dock - <i>Rumex crispus</i>	12
Dandelion - <i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	14
Mullein - <i>Verbascum thapsus</i>	16
Oxeye Daisy - <i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i> (<i>Chrysanthemum leucanthemum</i>)	18
Plantain - <i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	20
Sheep Sorrel - <i>Rumex acetosella</i>	22
Shepherd's Purse - <i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>	24
St. John's Wort - <i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	26
Vervain - <i>Verbena lasiostachys</i>	28
Yarrow - <i>Achillea millefolium</i>	30
<i>Moderately Sensitive to Harvest (native perennials)</i>	33
Elderberry - <i>Sambucus melanocarpa</i>	34
Elderberry, Blue - <i>Sambucus mexicana</i>	36
Horsetail, Common - <i>Equisetum arvense</i>	38
Horsetail, Common Scouring Rush - <i>Equisetum hyemale</i> ssp. <i>affine</i>	40
Horsetail, Smooth Scouring Rush - <i>Equisetum laevigatum</i>	42
Manzanita, Greenleaf - <i>Arctostaphylos patula</i>	44
Manzanita, Pinemat - <i>Arctostaphylos nevadensis</i>	46
Manzanita, Whiteleaf - <i>Arctostaphylos viscida</i>	48
Mugwort - <i>Artemisia douglasiana</i>	50
Self-Heal - <i>Prunella vulgaris</i> var. <i>lanceolata</i>	52
Yerba Santa - <i>Eriodictyon californicum</i>	54
<i>Sensitive to Harvest (slow growing native perennials)</i>	57
Coltsfoot, Western - <i>Petasites frigidus</i> var. <i>palmatum</i>	58
Oregon Grape - <i>Berberis nervosa</i>	60
Prince's Pine - <i>Chimaphila umbellata</i>	62
References	64

In Brief

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Demand for non-timber forest products (NTFPs), including floral greens, mushrooms, berries, and medicinal herbs, is increasing globally, and in response, growing numbers of people are enhancing their incomes by harvesting NTFPs from the wild. The interest in NTFPs is particularly strong in the Pacific Northwestern states of Washington and Oregon and in northern California. In these areas, especially where gathering occurs on public lands, concerns are being raised over the impacts of overharvesting on forest ecosystems, and over who should have access rights to NTFP resources. Controlling access to vast areas of public land when valuable and comparatively mobile resources, e.g., mushrooms, are involved is difficult at best; yet, if forest ecosystems are to continue to produce NTFPs in the long run, some mechanisms to manage harvesting are needed. The issue is complex, and an in-depth discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. However, one aspect of the problem is scarcity of information about the plants being gathered among harvesters, or "wildcrafters" as they are known in the NTFP trade, among public land management agency staff and the general public. One can hope that with better understanding of the ecological roles played by NTFPs and information on harvesting, many wildcrafters will exercise self control and learn how to gather NTFPs in ways and in volumes that minimize harvest damage to woods and wildlife, and ensure that there will be NTFPs to gather the next year. Although not everyone will follow such suggestions, and many other issues remain, increasing the number of responsible wildcrafters is a step in the right direction. This guide has been produced as part of an ongoing pilot program to increase communication and cooperation among wildcrafters, and between wildcrafters and public land management agency staff in the Hayfork Adaptive Management Area of the Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers National Forests, California. Wildcrafters, non-governmental organization staff, herbalists, and USDA Forest Service employees worked with the author to provide basic descriptions and ecological information, as well as develop guidelines for sustainable harvesting of 24 NTFP plant species found in the Hayfork Adaptive Management Area on the Shasta-Trinity and Six Rivers National Forests of northern California. Although much of the information collated here is valid throughout the ranges of the plant species discussed, the harvest guidelines, e.g., regarding suggested harvest quantities, are specific to this region. Because of variation in micro-climate, populations of the same species of plants may be found elsewhere in greater or lesser numbers, and specific guidelines for sustainable harvesting should be developed locally.

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The High Mountain Herb (HMH) Cooperative (Bridgeville, California), formed in the fall of 1993, is governed by five directors elected from its membership. HMH

promotes the development and expansion of agricultural endeavors of both cultivated and non-timber forest products, and is currently developing cooperative-owned processing and marketing facilities. Educational resources and assistance are available from: High Mountain Herb CO-OP, 151 Van Duzen Road, Bridgeville, CA 95526-9401. Tel: (707) 574-6574.

Trinity Alps Botanicals (TAB) (Burnt Ranch, California) is a non-profit agricultural cooperative producing and marketing quality wildcrafted medicinal herbs. Since 1991, the intent has been to provide an opportunity for income for local forest-dependent communities. It provides information and education regarding comprehensive growing and wildcrafting guidelines and techniques.

TAB is also working with an ethnobotanist to establish guidelines for sustainability and certification requirements for the harvest of native species. TAB works to support the harvesting of wild plants in a manner that increases their number and health. TAB currently buys and sells selected fresh and dried herbs, whole or cut and sift.