

Follow the Golden Rules of Wildcrafting By Kristine Brown, RH(AHG) of Herbal Roots zine

“Long before people bought medicine or food at a store, they learned to use the wild plants growing all around them. They watched animals to see which plants were good to eat and which plants were poisonous. They experimented and learned which plants could heal people when they were hurt or sick. People passed their knowledge onto their children and grandchildren for generations.”

-Ellen Evert Hopman, *Walking the World of Wonder*

1) Be a good land steward. Always pick up any debris you find on hiking trails, in the woods, etc. Remember to respect and be in awe for the beauty of nature and set a goal to always return a setting to its pristine state. When harvesting, don't leave a mess of plants behind. Be discreet.

2) Make a positive ID every time. Always double check your plants to make sure you are 100% sure of what you are harvesting. If unsure, leave it! Don't start tasting plants and berries if you are unsure.

3) Leave more than you take. When harvesting plants from the wild, only take what you need or a quarter of the stand, less if it is struggling or an endangered plant. Before harvesting, make sure there are other stands of the plant in the area. Never harvest from a weak looking stand.

4) Do not harvest endangered species. Learn to cultivate these plants in your local wild areas to help bring them back. Grow a patch in your own yard if possible for harvesting purposes. United Plant Savers offers a list of endangered species on their website.

5) Harvest at the right time. Don't harvest plants out of season. Dig roots in spring or fall, harvest leaves before the flowers bloom, harvest flowers as they open, etc. Learn the correct harvest times for each plant you are harvesting to avoid unnecessary waste. Plants harvested out of their peak harvest time will be less effective and possibly unusable depending on the plant.

6) Get permission. When harvesting on property that is not yours, make sure you have permission to harvest. Double check with state laws regarding wildcrafting on public lands as well. Some conservation areas allow harvesting, others do not. Each area often has its own rules about harvesting as well.

7) Avoid roadside harvesting. Plants growing near roadways are often contaminated with pollution from vehicles. Make sure you're off the beaten path for healthier harvesting.

8) Avoid treated lawns. Remember the importance of avoiding yards that are sprayed with pesticides, herbicides and other chemical sprays. Also be on the lookout for runoff from such lawns that go into wild areas. Some subdivisions have retention ponds where the runoff drains to after a rain. These areas are often teeming with lots of wild plants that are prime choices for harvesting. If they are in the path of the run off, do not harvest them.

More info: <http://www.herbalrootzine.com/articles/how-to-teach-kids-to-use-herbs-part-i/>