

Wildcrafting 01 - An Introduction

Good morning, my name's Stacey Krim,
and I'm a member of the UNCG Libraries Green Library Group.

We're starting a video series devoted to various gardening tips,
sustainability tips,

information we have available on those subjects,
as well as medicinal and edible herbs and plants on campus.

Today, as part of our series,
I'm going to talk to you a bit about wildcrafting,

of how it helps you develop a bond with your environment
and why it's a good idea to do it.

Later in the series we're going to tell you
how to safely identify edible and wild plants,

as well as those plants that are medicinal
and maybe some of their folklore,

and resources the library has available
for you to learn how to do this.

Well, the first question you want to know is
'What is wildcrafting?'

Wildcrafting is going out into your environment,
and picking up weeds,

plants that you haven't really cultivated,
and using them for edible and medicinal purposes.

This isn't something that many people do in our culture,
but it's a really fun and informative way

to relate to your environment.

Some of the reasons I first started wildcrafting:

one, it's a cheap source of food,
if you can safely identify those plants

that you can eat on a regular basis
in clean, non-polluted areas,

you have a fresh source of vegetables year-round.

One reason, also, is it's fun, and you get a lot
of exercise walking around looking for plants,

you get to go to a lot of places,
a lot of environments and ecological systems

you may not visit,
looking for specific plants for specific needs,

and it's a really cool way to get out
and get some exercise.

But the best way to use wildcrafting,
and the way I think is more important to this sort of

initiative on our campus of sustainability,
is it helps you learn to relate to your environment

because you're learning about plants,
of how they can benefit you,

and when you can walk to and from your car
and see 3-5 medicinal or edible plants,

the wall of green you see when you look
at landscaping and scenery

kind of fades away once you begin
to notice specific plants in your environment.

And when you know that, that plant,
I can use it for something,

it can fulfill a need within me,
you're more likely to be interested

in sustainability issues,
how polluted an area is

if they're using chemical fertilizers,
the type of landscaping, the rarity of that plant,

and how to harvest it safely.

We're going to talk about all of those issues,
but first, I'd like to also talk about some misconceptions

relating to wildcrafting and food foraging.

Probably the first misconception I run into

is that you have to know every single plant
in your environment to do this safely.

That's not true,
what you need to know are

all the poisonous plants in your environment
to wildcraft safely,

but I certainly don't know every plant I see
on a day to day basis.

If you can know 5 plants in your environment
that are edible or medicinal,

and you know how to use them to
the best of that plant's ability

and your ability, you can do a lot,
and you don't really need to go much beyond that.

The second misconception I run into
is that it's really difficult to identify plants,

and that's really just a matter of observation,
we're going to go through some basic techniques

on plant identification, you don't need to be a botanist.

It's not really difficult when you start
paying attention to your environment.

The third misconception I run into
is when you see a plant,

you have to harvest it at that moment,
so there's always the stress of

'I don't know what stage of development the plant is,'
if it's a new plant,

I may not be able to recognize it fully.
A lot of times with plants,

even though I know I can use them medicinally,
or they're a food source,

I don't pick them because I don't need them,
but also because it's a food source for other animals,

and when I know it's there and I've identified it,
and I've looked around to see if it's a clean environment,

it's just a bit comforting to know it's there,
it's like having a medicine cabinet in nature.

And the final misconception I think most people have
is that you need to go to a wilderness area

to hunt and wildcraft for plants,
and that's not true.

You can go into a wilderness area,
you can go to a park,

a forest, your front lawn; it doesn't matter;
cities have plants you can wildcraft with.

Probably the worst environment from which to wildcraft
would be, in my opinion,

those suburban landscaped lawns that have been
cultivated to within an inch of their life

with chemical fertilizers and weed killers
and pest killers

so that the grass looks like a green carpet,
and every shrub has been cut back,

those are probably the worst places to wildcraft.

But on our campus,
there's tons of stuff for you to do here.

So, as we began our series,
we're going to talk a bit about how your environments,

both your microenvironment and the macroenvironment,
relate to how safely you can wildcraft,

what types of plants are going to be there,
We're going to talk about some legal issues

you need to know about
before you begin wildcrafting, and most of all,

we're going to talk about how to do it safely,
so there's less of a chance of you

running into a dangerous plant,
or using a plant that may be from a polluted source.

In addition to this wildcrafting series and herbs series
were going to have other people talk about tips.

If you have anything you would like to ask us,

or any suggestions,

please post it below on our YouTube comments.

As resources on this first section,
to get you started,

I'd like to direct you to
the UNCG Libraries sustainability libguide,

where we're going to be posting links about this sessions,
as well as all of the other videos we produce

relating to library resources on sustainability,
foraging, wild plants, field guides, everything.

There's also some really cool online resources from openculture
that include full online courses related to environment,

sustainability, and philosophy behind environmentalism.

Please, continue to view our videos,
and if you have any questions, please let us know.

Thank you, and have a great day.

Disclaimer:

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Links:

UNCG Libraries Sustainability Libguide
<http://uncg.libguides.com/sustainability>

Openculture Online Courses
<http://www.openculture.com/>