

October 16, 2024

Wild Edibles and Medicines of Northwestern Ontario.

Please note, this is not a comprehensive list, but a small sample of what is available around us. Please also note, I am a learner, and not an expert. I share what I know, but have lots to learn.

If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to me at shyanne.leah@gmail.com

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Wild Berries:

Here are some wild edible berries and plants you can find in Northwestern Ontario, along with useful links for identification and safety:

1. **Lowbush Blueberry** - A common berry in the region, great for eating fresh or in jams. They thrive in acidic soils and are rich in antioxidants. [More info](#)
2. **Raspberries and Blackberries** - Raspberries are hollow inside when picked, while blackberries are solid. Both are excellent for making jams or baking. More info on berry picking and safety
3. **Bearberry** - Small, red berries that can be eaten raw or used in herbal teas. [More info](#)
4. **Chokecherry** - These berries are astringent but can be used for jellies or syrups after cooking. [More info](#)
5. **Highbush Cranberry** - Often used in jams or sauces; its tartness makes it ideal for cooking. [More info](#)
6. **Bunchberry** - A low-growing plant producing clusters of red berries, though their taste is mild, they are edible. [More info](#)

Other Berries to consider: Saskatoon, pincherry, wintergreen, rosehip (not really a berry, but worth noting here)

When foraging, always follow safety guidelines and ensure you correctly identify the plants before consuming them. For more comprehensive lists, visit [Northern Bushcraft's Guide](#).

Wild Mushrooms:

Here are some wild edible mushrooms found in Northern Ontario:

1. **Morels (Morchella Genus)** – These mushrooms have a cone-shaped cap with a honeycomb texture and are hollow inside. They are commonly found in the spring under fallen trees or in sandy forests. However, they should never be eaten raw due to potential toxicity. [Learn more.](#)
2. **Chanterelles (Cantharellus Genus)** – These popular mushrooms are funnel-shaped with gill-like ridges and a bright yellow or orange color. They thrive in coniferous and deciduous forests, often growing in groups during the summer and fall. [More info.](#)
3. **Chicken of the Woods (Laetiporus Sulphureus)** – Known for its vibrant orange-yellow color and fan-like structure, this mushroom is easy to spot and has a texture similar to chicken. It grows on decaying or living trees during summer and autumn. [Details here.](#)
4. **Puffballs (Lycoperdon Genus)** – These round, white mushrooms lack gills and produce spores inside their bodies. They grow in mixed woodlands and meadows, particularly in fall. Young puffballs are edible when their flesh is completely white. Find out more.
5. **Bear's Head Tooth (Hericium Americanum)** – With a fur-like, branched structure, this mushroom starts white and turns yellow as it ages. Found on trees or branches in late summer and fall, it is an edible species that also has medicinal properties. [Check it out.](#)

Others worth looking into: Lobster, Honey Mushrooms, and Hedge hogs.

Always make sure to properly identify any wild mushrooms before consuming them, and it's a good practice to consult a local expert if you're unsure. For additional information and identification tips, check out the [Ontario Mushroom Guide](#).

Wild Greens:

Here is a list of wild edible greens that can be foraged in northern Ontario:

1. **Stinging Nettle (*Urtica dioica*)** – Found in meadows, it's best harvested in spring before flowering. Cooked nettles are rich in nutrients and can be used in soups or as a substitute for spinach. Always wear gloves to avoid stings during harvest.
 - [Northern Bushcraft](https://www.northernbushcraft.com/guide.php?ctgy=edible_plants®ion=ontario)
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)
2. **Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)** – Commonly found in fields and meadows. The leave
[Outdoor Canada](#)
salads, while the roots can be used to make tea.
 - [More info](#)
3. ****Fiddleheads (*Matteuccia struthio*)**
[Northeastern Ontario Canada](#)
The young shoots of ferns are found in moist woodlands. These must be boiled or sautéed before eating.
 - [More info](#)
4. **Wild Leek (*Allium* species)** – Found in woodlands, it resembles a small onion. It's harvested in early spring and is often used in soups and
[Northern Bushcraft](#)
More info](<https://www.outdoorcanada.ca/15-wild-plants-you-can-eat/>)
5. ****Fireweed (*Chamaenerion*)**
[Northern Bushcraft](#)
This
[Outdoor Canada](#)
in areas and the young shoots can be harvested and eaten similarly to asparagus.
 - [More info](#)

Other Greens to consider: Plantain, Clover, Lambs Quarter, spruce buds

For more detailed information on these and other wild edibles, you can explore guides like [Northern Bushcraft](#) or [Outdoor Canada](#).

Medicinal Plants:

Here's a list of medicinal plants that can be found in Northwestern Ontario, along with their traditional uses:

- 1. Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*):** Used for its antiseptic properties, yarrow can be applied to wounds to stop bleeding and is also taken as a tea for colds, fevers, and stomach ailments.
 - More info: Canadian Encyclopedia
- 2. Sweetflag (*Acorus americanus*):** Traditionally used by Indigenous peoples for respiratory issues, sore throats, and toothaches. It's often chewed or used in tea form.
 - More info: Canadian Encyclopedia
- 3. Labrador Tea (*Rhododendron groenlandicum*):** The leaves are brewed into tea for colds, coughs, and as a general tonic.
 - More info: [MyBackyard](#)
- 4. Fireweed (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*):** This plant has soothing properties and is used for burns, skin irritation, and digestive health.
 - More info: [MyBackyard](#)
- 5. Red-osier Dogwood (*Cornus sericea*):** Often used in poultices for treating wounds, infections, and skin issues, as well as for digestive problems.
 - More info: Canadian Encyclopedia

Other medicines to consider: various barks (alder, white willow, tamarack), spruce buds, juniper

These plants are integral to Indigenous medicine in the region and are often used in various forms such as teas, poultices, and infusions. Remember to forage responsibly and ensure correct identification before use.

Uses of various bark:

In Northwestern Ontario, tree bark has been utilized in various ways, both traditionally by Indigenous peoples and in modern applications. Here are some of its primary uses:

1. **Cedar Bark for Weaving and Crafting:** Cedar bark, especially from the Western Redcedar, is used to make baskets, clothing, mats, and ceremonial items. The bark is harvested in spring when it is easy to strip from the tree and then processed into thin strips for weaving. It is also used to create regalia and sacred objects
[Indigenous Tourism BC](#)
[SFU Library Digital Publishing](#)
.
2. **Medicinal Uses:** The bark of certain trees, like cedar, also has medicinal purposes. Cedar bark and its oils are used in traditional healing practices for respiratory ailments and infections. The bark can be burned or brewed into teas
[Indigenous Tourism BC](#)
.
3. **Construction and Utility:** Historically, cedar and birch bark were used to construct canoes, shelters, and baskets. Birch bark is especially valued for being waterproof and durable, making it ideal for containers and canoe building
[Northwest Treaty Tribes](#)
.
4. **Fire-Starting and Fuel:** Dry bark, such as that from birch trees, is excellent for kindling due to its flammability and is used to start fires even in wet conditions
[SFU Library Digital Publishing](#)
.
5. **Cultural and Ceremonial Significance:** Harvesting bark, especially cedar, is often a spiritual practice in Indigenous cultures, involving rituals that honor the tree and ensure sustainable practices
[Northwest Treaty Tribes](#)
.

For more detailed information, you can explore additional resources

[Indigenous Tourism BC](#)

Edible Nuts/Protiens

Here is a list of wild nuts and legumes you can find in Northwestern Ontario:

1. **Beechnuts:** Beechnut trees produce small triangular nuts that are edible and can be eaten raw or roasted. They're typically found in forests across the region
[Practical Self Reliance](#)
.
2. **Hazelnuts:** Wild hazelnuts are commonly found in bushy areas and along forest edges. They're often harvested before animals get to them and can be eaten raw or roasted
[Practical Self Reliance](#)

[ON Nature Magazine](#)
.
3. **Black Walnuts:** These nuts have a tough outer shell and a rich flavor. Black walnut trees can be found in forests and around old homesteads
[Practical Self Reliance](#)
.
4. **Butternuts:** Known for their sweet, mild flavor, butternuts are similar to black walnuts but are becoming less common due to a canker disease
[Practical Self Reliance](#)
.
5. **Groundnuts (Apios americana):** Also known as the potato bean, this legume grows along riverbanks and wetlands. The tubers and seeds are edible
[Northern Bushcraft](#)

Medicinal Tree Born Fungi

Here is a list of tree-born medicinal fungi found in northwestern Ontario:

1. Chaga (*Inonotus obliquus*)

- Grows on birch trees and is well-known for its immune-boosting, anti-inflammatory, and antioxidant properties. Chaga is used to help fight infections, lower cholesterol, and manage blood sugar levels. It has also been researched for its potential to prevent and combat cancer

[Alpha Extracts](#)

[Tao Tea Leaf](#)

[Mushroom Site](#)

- Learn more about harvesting and preparing Chaga: [Chaga Mushroom Identification](#)

2. Artist's Conk (*Ganoderma applanatum*)

- Found on hardwood trees, especially maples. Artist's Conk has anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties and is often used in teas or tinctures for boosting immune health and as an overall tonic.
- More info: Herb Wisdom - Artist's Conk

3. Birch Polypore (*Fomitopsis betulina*)

- A medicinal mushroom growing on birch trees, it is used traditionally for wound healing, treating infections, and improving digestion. Birch Polypore has antimicrobial and immune-supporting properties

[Alpha Extracts](#)

- Find out more: [Fungi Ally - Birch Polypore](#)

These fungi have been widely researched for their medicinal benefits and are commonly used in teas, tinctures, or as extracts to support health. Always consult with an expert or healthcare professional before consuming wild fungi.

More Medicinal Plants (some repeated)

Here is a list of medicinal plants that can be found in northwestern Ontario:

- 1. Labrador Tea (*Rhododendron groenlandicum*) – Traditionally used for respiratory issues and as a mild sedative. Its leaves can be brewed into tea.**
- 2. Joe Pye Weed (*Eutrochium purpureum*) – Known for its diuretic properties and traditionally used to treat fevers and kidney issues.**
- 3. Fireweed (*Chamerion angustifolium*) – The leaves and stems can be used to treat wounds, and the plant is also known for its anti-inflammatory properties.**
- 4. Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) – Frequently used for wound healing, anti-inflammatory properties, and as a digestive aid.**
- 5. Red Clover (*Trifolium pratense*) – Often used in teas to help with respiratory problems, and is thought to have detoxifying properties.**
- 6. Plantain (*Plantago major*) – Known for its use in treating skin conditions, like cuts and insect bites, due to its anti-inflammatory properties.**
- 7. Rosehips (*Rosa* spp.) – Rich in vitamin C and traditionally used to boost the immune system and support skin health.**
- 8. St. John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) – Known for its use in treating mild depression, anxiety, and skin wounds.**
- 9. Cattail (*Typha* spp.) – Besides being a source of food, parts of the plant have been used to soothe wounds and burns.**
- 10. Goldenrod (*Solidago* spp.) – Used as an anti-inflammatory and for treating urinary tract infections.**

These plants have a rich history of traditional uses, many of which align with modern medicinal applications. Be sure to properly identify and understand the plant's uses before harvesting.

For more details on medicinal plants of the region, you can check out some foraging resources such as

[My Backyard](#)

[ps://mybackyard.ca/wild-edib](https://mybackyard.ca/wild-edib)

[Lakehead CA](#)

Edible Flowers:

Here are some edible wild flowers you can find in Northwestern Ontario, along with their uses:

1. **Clover (Red, White, and Sweet White)**
These clovers are often used in teas and salads and are also beneficial for their medicinal properties, like aiding in digestion and acting as anti-inflammatory agents.
More info: [myBackyard Foraging Guide](#)
[My Backyard](#)
2. **Fireweed**
This vibrant pink flower is both edible and medicinal. Young shoots can be eaten raw or cooked, while the flowers can be used in salads or as a garnish. The plant also has anti-inflammatory properties.
More info: [Northern Ontario Travel Guide](#)
[Northern Ontario Travel](#)
3. **Oxeye Daisy**
The young leaves of the Oxeye daisy are edible and can be added to salads. It also has traditional medicinal uses, including treating coughs and respiratory issues.
More info: [Docslib Foraging Guide](#)
[Docslib](#)
4. **Rose (Rosehips)**
The petals and rosehips of wild roses are edible and high in vitamin C. Rosehips can be used to make jams, teas, and syrups, which are popular in Indigenous communities for their health benefits.
More info: [myBackyard Foraging Guide](#)
[My Backyard](#)

These flowers not only offer foraging opportunities but also contribute to sustainable and nutritious diets.

