



## San Juan National Forest Service Guidelines for the Ethical and Sustainable Harvesting of Wild Plants



Wild plants are harvested for food, medicine, dyes and general well being. Harvesting can be done in a sustainable way to ensure the continued viability of those plant populations. Wild plants can be harvested for personal use on the San Juan National Forest. Small amounts of botanical products such as berries, leaves, dry cones and mushrooms may be collected without a permit. **Any activity that involves killing the plant or involves frequent harvest requires a permit.** Free use permits are available for up to \$20.00 worth of product/individual/year. Free use or commercial permits are required for digging roots or cutting trees.

Any commercial collecting must be done under a permit. Permits can be obtained at any Forest Service office.

- Before collecting from the wild, consider using domestic or cultivated plants. Are there any alternative plants that can be cultivated?
- Before harvesting, make sure you know your plant and are sure of its identity. Harvesting the wrong plant is wasteful and damaging to the environment.
- Know what species are at risk in your bioregion. Never collect threatened, endangered or sensitive plants. The San Juan National Forest local offices can provide you with this information.
- Be opportunistic and harvest from areas that will be disturbed by logging or development. Local San Juan National Forest offices can provide you with information.
- Only harvest what you need or can reasonably use. Over harvest is wasteful and threatens the population. Properly dried and stored herbs have a shelf life of six months to one year.
- Don't be in a hurry. Scout out to see if there is more than one population. Check to see if there are signs of other people harvesting in the area. Find the healthiest population that doesn't appear to have been harvested.
- Be aware of the health of the environment, if the plants are stressed due to drought or other disturbance, don't harvest them.
- To avoid over harvesting any one population, move around collecting only a small amount of plant material from any one population.
- Leave healthy seed producing plants in the population to reproduce.
- The rule of thumb is to harvest less than 5% of the population. Less if harvest has occurred in the same area.
- Try not to disturb or compact soils where you are working. Leave the area as you found it...fill in any holes and step lightly.
- When you harvest plants spread the seeds of the plant.
- Remember that when you are harvesting roots or tubers, you are killing that plant. Don't take the whole root of a plant or replant root crowns of plants such as osha to ensure regeneration.
- Go back and monitor the effects of your harvest...become a steward and study the plants and how they respond.

Questions or concerns should be directed to Gretchen Fitzgerald, Columbine Ranger District, (970) 884-2512.

*Caring for the Land and Caring for the Land and Serving People*