TREES, PLANTS AND THEIR USES



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IMPORTANT

The instructions and ingredients of the herbal remedies were intentionally excluded because, if you are currently taking any drugs - either prescribed or over- the-counter, or have any medical conditions or problems, it is wise to consult a naturally oriented physician (or your family doctor) who is aware of the herb - drug interactions and any potentially dangerous side effects before taking any herbal remedies.

TREES



TREES

The Native trees of Canada fall into two groups - coniferous and deciduous. The first group, the coniferous trees, include those trees whose leaves remain on the tree for two seasons or longer, and the second group, the deciduous, include those trees whose leaves change colour in autumn and shed from the tree in late fall.

The forests of Canada are largely composed of coniferous trees. Within this group, there are nine species of pine, three larches, five spruces, two cedars, three hemlocks, one Douglas-fir, four true firs, one cypress, two junipers and one yew. That is a total of 31 species compared to over 100 deciduous species.

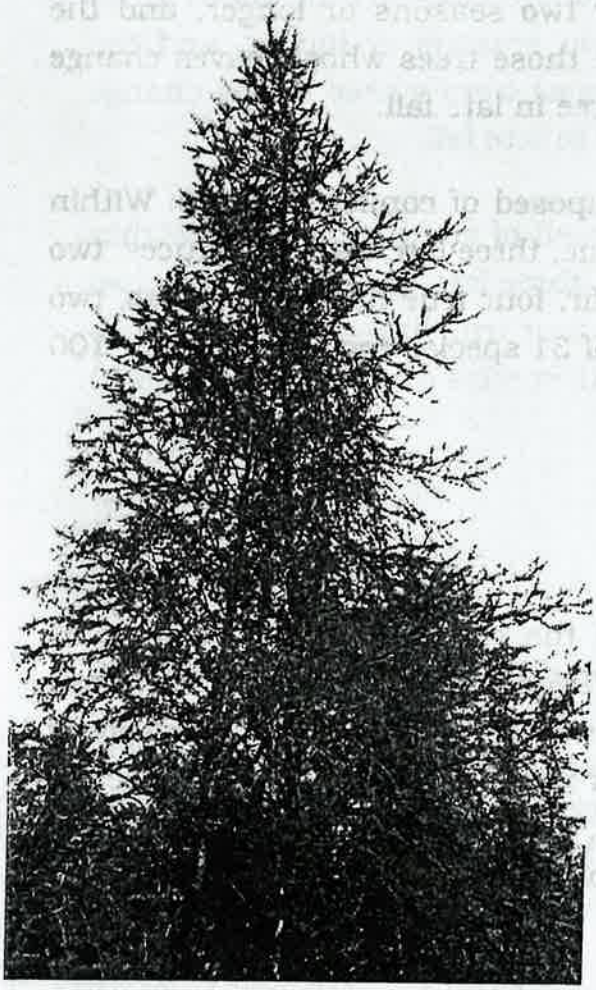
The Coniferous Trees

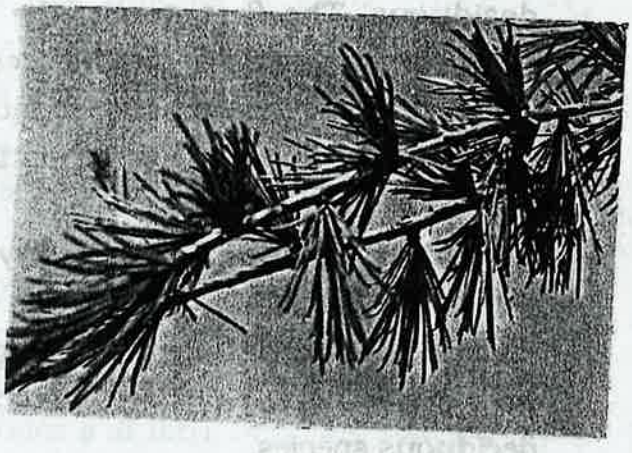
The coniferous trees better know as the conifers are also known as evergreens, needle-leafed trees, or softwood. Trees, when mature, have straight trunk with short branches which spread to form conical or columnar crown. The leaves are either very narrow or small and scale-like. With the exception of the larch, all cone-bearing trees (conifers) remain green during the winter. The wood of most conifers is soft, resinous and non-porous.

The Deciduous Trees

Deciduous trees are known as broad-leaved or broadleaf trees, or hardwoods. Their form varies a great deal but the most common form is broad rounded crown. The leaves are wide and remain on the tree for only one season. The wood is hard, heavy and non-resinous in most species.

TAMARACK





The needles are about 1 inch long and are formed in clusters on the twig. The needles change to a bright gold colour in early fall and are shed in the late fall..



SIZE - A small to medium sized tree 30-70 feet in height, and 1-2 feet diameter.

Bark - The bark is narrow, smooth and greyish in colour in young trees, while it is reddish brown and scaly in mature trees.

The tamarack is moderately hard, lightweight, flexible, somewhat oily and has a strong resistance to decay.

TAMARACK

Family group: Pine

Botanical Name: Larix laricina

Common names: Hackmatack, eastern larch, american larch, alaskan, larch, black larch

Size and form: Average size tree, up to 70 feet tall, diameter up to 2 feet wide, straight trunk and conical crown, ascending branches, root system is shallow and wide spreading; in the north and on mountain slopes, tamaracks are often stunted with reduced crown, short needles and narrow cone scales.

Needles/leaves: "Leaves" are needle shaped, 1 inch long, flexible, soft, light green in summer, yellow in autumn, 10-20 needles in a tuft (cluster) on a twig.

Twigs: Hairless, slender, orange-brown, buds are dark red or brown, small, round and smooth.

Bark: Thin, smooth, grey when young, reddish brown and becomes scaly as it matures, inner bark is dark reddish purple.

Cones: 1/2 inch long, light brown with smooth scales. It has stalks that are stout, short and curved and short bracts visible only at the base of the cone, cones open in late summer or early fall.

Habitat: Found mainly on wet, poorly drained sites such as swamps but grows better on moist, well-drained, light soils. It grows in the most northerly forests in pure stands or in mixture of trembling aspen, white spruce, black spruce, white birch, balsam fir.

Medicinal uses: Diarrhea, rheumatism, bronchitis, melancholy, poisonous insect bites, asthma, liver and spleen conditions, stomach, bowels, long lasting bleeding in lungs, menstruation, eye wash, earache, poultice, salve, sitz-bath and gargle for soar throat.

Other uses: Railway ties, boat building, pulpwood, poles, posts, piling, boxes, crates.

Native uses: Snowshoes, toboggan, decoys, ax handles, arrows, support guards for tikinagans, tanning hides, heating and cooking, cooking utensils. Bark is used as cleansing agent, poultice and other ailments.

JACK PINE





The needles which can be straight or twisted, stiff and sharp tipped, grow in clusters on the twig and are about 3/4 inch to 2 inches long.



SIZE - A medium sized tree averages 40 to 80 feet in height and 8 inches to 2 feet in diameter.

Bark - The bark in mature trees is dark brown and flaky furrowed into thick plates.

JACK PINE

Family group: Pine

Botanical name: Pinus banksiana

Common names: Gray pine, Bank's pine, Hudson's Bay pine, scrub pine, pine princess, banksian pine, princy

Size and form: In the open stand, the tree grows to an average size up to 80 feet tall and up to 2 feet wide; the crown is open and conical with ascending and arching branches. It has a tapered trunk. In closed stand, the tree has shorter crown and a trunk that is slender, straight and tapered. On poor soils and on rocky sites, the tree is short, often twisted. The branches are stout and wide-spreading. Some of the branches are either dead or dying, thus the unkempt appearance of the crown. The root system is deep and wide-spreading without taproot except on deep porous soils.

Needles/leaves: The needles grow in clusters of twos on the twig, and have persistent basal sheaths. Needles are about 2 inches long, sharp-pointed, spread apart, straight and slightly twisted, stiff, pale yellowish-green.

Twigs: Slender, yellowish-green turning grayish-brown as it ages. The branchlets are grooved and ridged.

Bark: Young bark is reddish-brown to gray becoming dark brown, flaky and trunk furrowed with irregular thick plates

Cones: Shapes could be conical, straight, curved inwards, oblong, asymmetrical. They are 3 inches long, stalkless, whorled, usually pointing forward, scales are thick, smooth usually closed and persistent on trees, clusters of 2 or 3 at nodes.

Habitat: Grows on poor soils such as shallow soils, coarse sands, and rock outcrops. It may form pure stands or mixed stands with white birch, balsam fir, white spruce, black spruce, trembling aspen and balsam poplar.

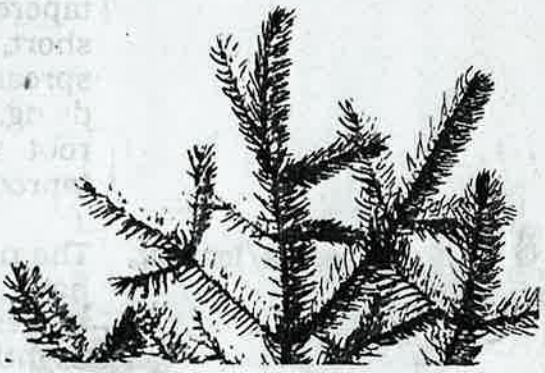
Medicinal uses: The cone, bark and resin may have been used for medicinal purposes.

Other uses: Wood pulp, railway ties, poles, pilings, mine timbers.

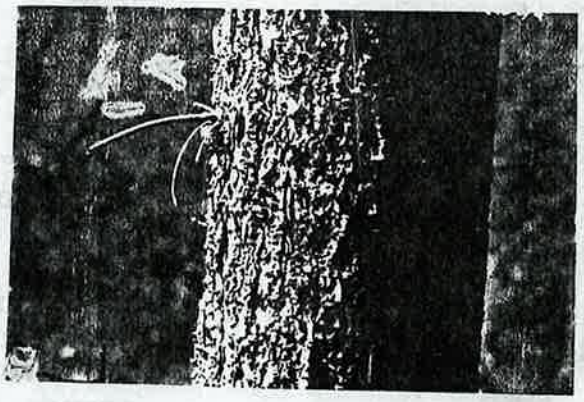
Native uses: Lumber, carving art work, wooden shovel, toboggan, sled, compressed ash was used to make bleach or lye soap.

WHITE SPRUCE





Needles are about 3/4 inch long, stiff with blunt ends and have a strong aroma.



SIZE - Some trees grow to 120 in height and 2-4 feet in diameter. Its size is the only difference to its relative, the black spruce.

Bark - The bark has thin scales and the bottom part of the trunk is usually covered with dead branches.

WHITE SPRUCE

Family group: Pine

Botanical name: Picea glauca

Common names: Skunk spruce, pasture spruce, canadian spruce, cat spruce.

Size and form: Average size up to 80 feet tall and 2 feet in diameter, crown is conical, ragged and irregular with bushy branches that generally spread downwards. Root system is shallow with many roots that are pliable, tough and wide-spreading.

Needles/leaves: Straight, stiff, broad needle shaped about 3/4 inch long with blunt ends, green to bluish-green, lines of white dots on all sides.

Twigs: Usually hairless, white-gray to yellowish often tinged with orange or purple,

Bark: Smooth, thin, young bark is light gray which becomes darker gray and scaly as it matures, nearly exposed bark is pinkish and silvery, inner bark is silvery white.

Cones: About 2 inches long, slender, cylindrical roundish close-fitting light brown scales, cones open late summer or early autumn and fall during winter or early spring.

Habitat: It grows on various kinds of soils and climates. It forms mixed stands with trembling aspen, white birch, balsam fir, and black spruce on well-drained, moist and silty soils; shade tolerant.

Medicinal uses: The cone, bark and resin may have been used for medicinal purposes.

Other uses: The tree is used in the production of wood pulp, lumber, and by-products.

Native uses: Heating and cooking, snowshoes, toboggan, sled, lumber, paddles, tent poles, poling for canoes, floor covering. Natives used the root to lace up birch bark for canoes and resin was used as a glue.

BLACK SPRUCE





Needles are straight with a blunt tip and about 1/2 inch long.



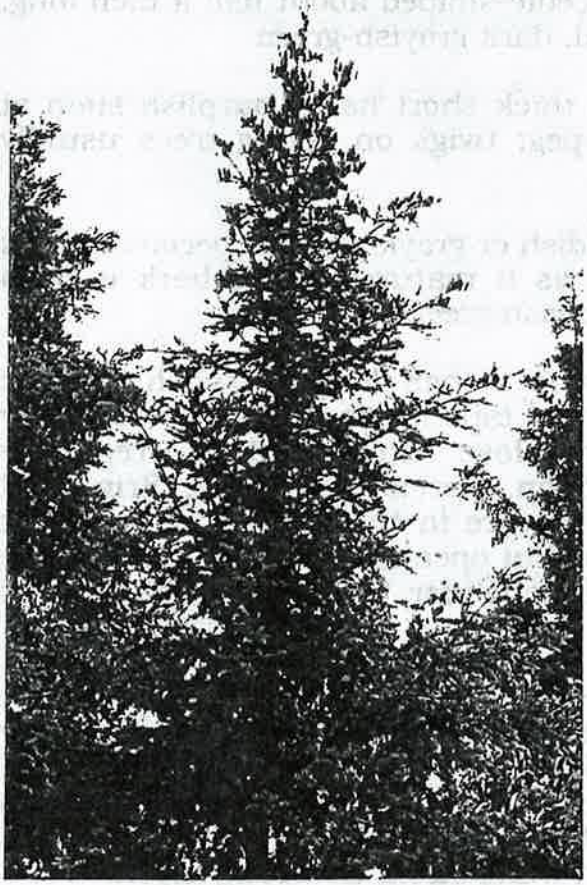
SIZE - A medium sized tree grows to about 20-60 feet in height and 6-14 inches in diameter.

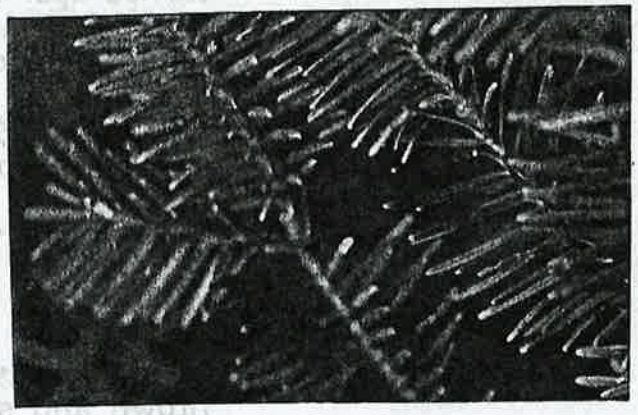
Bark - The bark has thin scales and the bottom part of the trunk is usually covered with dead branches.

BLACK SPRUCE

Family group:	Pine
Botanical name:	Picea mariana
Common names:	Bog spruce, swamp spruce
Size and form:	Medium size tree about 20 to 60 feet tall and up to 14 inches in diameter. In a warmer place, it may grow to 100 feet with diameter of about 10 inches. In the tundra or cold climate, it may be dwarfed to a shrub. The crown is narrow with drooping branches and up-turned tips. Upper part of the crown is compact, thick, oddly shaped, and has many cones. The root system is usually shallow.
Needles/leaves:	Broad, straight needle-shaped about half a inch long, stiff, blunt-pointed, dark grayish-green.
Twigs:	Dark brown with thick short hairs, purplish stain at the base of leaf-peg; twigs on young trees usually hairless.
Bark:	Young bark is reddish or grayish brown becoming dark brown and scaly as it matures; inner bark is deep olive-green or yellowish green.
Cones:	Oval shaped, about 1 inch long, purplish to dark brown, blunt-pointed tapering to a short curved scaly stalks, scales are close fitting, brittle, irregularly toothed. When open, spread outwards, firm, and spherical. Cones mature in the autumn and are not shed from the tree, but open at intervals to release the seeds throughout the winter. Cones are in clusters at the top.
Habitat:	It grows in different soils and climates. In southern climates, it is confined to sphagnum bogs or poorly drained sites. It forms pure stands or with tamarack. In the north, it grows on well-drained slopes or flats and forms pure stands or mixed with jack pine, white spruce, balsam fir, white birch, trembling aspen.
Medicinal uses:	Upset stomach
Other uses:	Pulpwood, lumber, paper products
Native uses:	Paddles, cones for tanning or dye and cleansing agent, branches for floor covering, inner bark for upset stomach, resin as a chewing gum.

BALSAM FIR





Needles are flat, short and soft.



SIZE - A small to medium sized tree 50-90 feet in height, and 1-2 feet diameter.

Bark - The bark is covered with blisters (sticky sap), and is awkward to handle

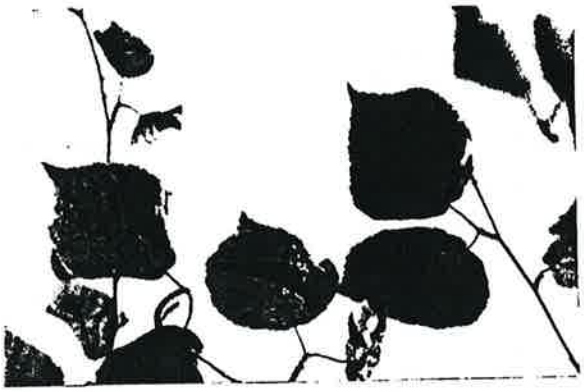
BALSAM FIR

Family group:	Pine
Botanical name:	Abies balsamea
Common names:	Canadian balsam, blister fir, white fir, church steeple, silver pine
Size and form:	An average size tree that grows to about 62 feet tall with a diameter about 2 feet. It has a narrow pyramidal crown with slender horizontal branches. Slightly tapering trunk below the crown is usually covered with dead branches. On open-grown trees, lower branches remain alive and green foliage extends to the ground. The root system is shallow.
Needles/leaves:	Needles are about 1 1/4 inch long, 2 ranked, short on the upper side of the twig. Resin canals are small and have a strong odor when crushed.
Twigs:	Twigs, which are greenish gray, are smooth and slightly hairy.
Bark:	Young bark is grayish and smooth with raised resin blisters, and break into irregular brownish scales as it ages.
Cones:	Oblong up to 4 inches long, grayish brown, sticky, upright and fleshy, open when ripe.
Habitat:	Because it is adaptable, it grows in variety of soils and climates. It forms pure stands or mixed stands with white birch, white spruce, black spruce, red spruce, trembling aspen and eastern hemlock.
Medicinal uses:	Bladder problems, burns
Other uses:	Pulpwood, lumber, christmas tree
Native uses:	Inner bark is used for bladder problems. The tree, with or without branches, was used to make a shelter, branches were used as floor covering and as an air freshener, resin was used as an ointment for burns. Nowadays, it is used as Christmas tree.

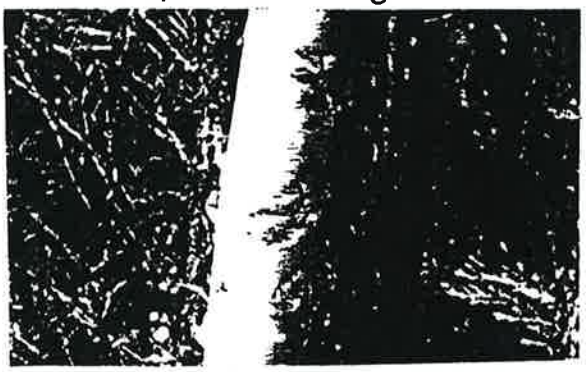
WHITE BIRCH



SIZE - A medium size tree grows to about 20 to 60 feet in height and 2 feet in diameter. The only difference to its relative, the black spruce.



The leaves are egg-shaped or triangular with a jagged shaped ridge and are about 3- 3 1/2 inches long.



Bark - The bark is thin, smooth and reddish brown in colour when the tree is young and as it matures the bark turns creamy white and peels into large sheets at the base of the trunk.

WHITE BIRCH

Family group: Birch Botanical name: Betula alba (papyrifera)

Common names: Paper birch, canoe birch,

Size and form: Medium size tree up to 60 feet tall and 2 feet in wide, the trunk is slender, often curved, narrow oval open crown which is usually composed of ascending branches.

Leaves: Oval or triangular with pointed tip, about 3 1/2 inches long and double-toothed, up to nine pairs of veins each extending to one of the large teeth on the edge with smaller intervening teeth, dull green on the upper side and lighter with soft down underneath, new leaves are usually hairy especially at the vein axis.

Twigs: Slender, hairy for a few weeks, dark reddish brown with greenish brown buds tapering to blunt point, resinous, bud scales are greenish toward the base and brown toward the tip.

Bark: Young trunk have thin, smooth, dark red (almost black) bark that turn creamy white as it ages. It peels into sheets exposing reddish orange inner bark which eventually turns to black as it matures.

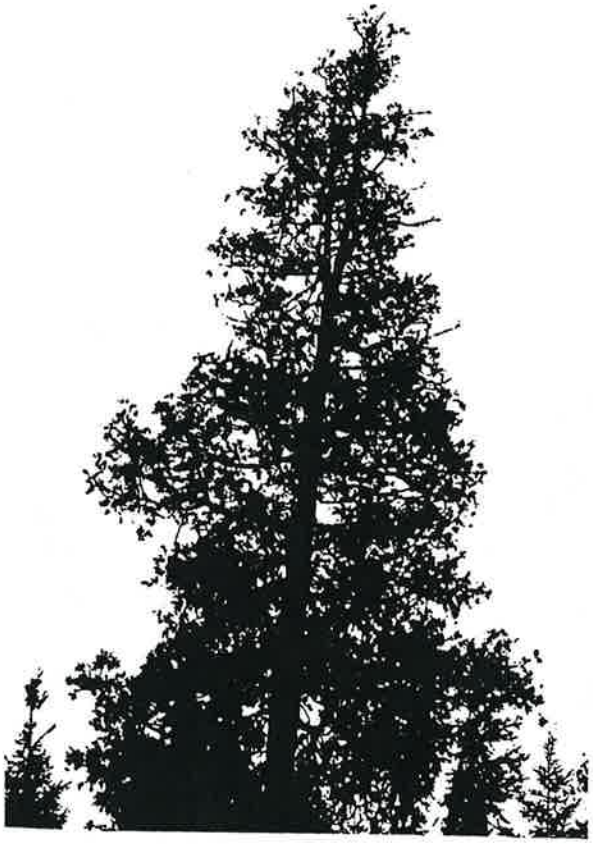
Uses as food: Sap is used as a sweetener, beaten ground bark is used as food additive, leaves are ground to make a tea.

Medicinal uses: None

Other uses: Dry leaves and bark are used as a dye material, turnery, pulpwood, veneer stock.

Native uses: Bark is used for re-enforcing material for beading, basket or food containers, canoes, shelter covering, roots were used as rope or string, sap as a sweet drink

EASTERN WHITE CEDAR
OR
NORTHERN WHITE CEDAR





The leaves are mostly flat, 1/8 inch long and are a soft yellowish green in colour.



SIZE - A medium sized tree 40-100 feet in height, and 1-3 feet diameter. Its overall form is full.

Bark - The bark is greyish brown. The mature tree sheds its bark into long thin strips.

The wood from this tree has a strong resistance to decay and is lightweight, soft and noted for its fragrance.

EASTERN WHITE CEDAR

Family group: Cypress Botanical name: Thuja occidentalis

Common names: Northern white cedar, tree of life, eastern thuja, eastern arborvitae, yellow cedar, swamp cedar

Size and form: Trees can grow up to 100 feet with a 3 foot diameter. Crown is narrow, conical, almost columnar which extends to the ground. Branches bend downwards before arching upwards towards their tips. The foliage is dense with a pruned appearance. The trunk is rugged and tapered, often twisted. Root system is shallow and wide-spreading. Sometimes the trunk is broad at the base or is divided into two or more secondary limbs.

Needles/leaves: Dull yellowish green or light green, about 1/4 inch long with resin glands on a vigorously growing trees.

Twigs: Yellowish-green on both sides, waxy, scale-like, broadly fan-shaped usually horizontal and stiff.

Bark: Young bark is thin, shreddy, shiny, reddish-brown turning into long, narrow, flat gray ridges.

Cones: Oval, up to about 1/2 inch long, upright on short curved stalk, scales are leathery. Cones ripen in the summer and shed the following year.

Habitat: It grows in swampy areas where water is not too acidic and the underlying rock is limestone, in very shallow dry soils that cover flat limestone rock, and in sphagnum bogs. It forms pure stands or mixed stands of balsam fir, white spruce, tamarack and black spruce in wet swampy areas, and white birch, white aspens and poplar in dry soils.

Medicinal uses: To relief muscular aches and pains, chronic coughs, fevers, acute pain in the joints, gout (uric acid retention), salve, pain caused by excess flow of menstruation.

Other uses: Small poles, fence posts, cedar strip canoes, shingles, boat building.

Native uses: Air freshener, cleansing agent, cough syrup, carving, art work, snowshoes, ax handles, shelter covering, canoe ribs. Cedar was also used in spiritual practices.

BALSAM POPLAR





The leaves are egg shaped and have jagged edges with a sharp tip and are about 3 to 5 inches long.



SIZE - A medium sized tree averages about 40 to 100 feet in height and 1 to 4 feet in diameter.

Bark - The bark is smooth and greenish brown in colour in young trees and as the tree matures, it develops deep flat-topped ridges at the base of its trunk.

BALSAM POPLAR

Family group: Willow Botanical name: Populus balsamifera

Common names: Tacmahac, eastern balsam poplar

Size and form: Average height (up to 100 feet), up to 4 feet in diameter, sometimes the tallest tree in the north; long, straight, cylindrical trunk, narrow open crown, ascending branches, shallow root system.

Leaves: Oval shape with sharp tapered tip and have toothed edges, about 5 inches long, dark green shiny on the top, whitish green on the underside, hairless.

Twigs: Stout, smooth, reddish brown turning gray with age, end bud is about 1 inch long, slender, pointed, resinous, fragrant, reddish brown, pressed against the twig.

Bark: Young bark is greenish brown that turns dark gray as it gets old and becomes furrowed into scaly ridges separated by V-shaped irregular crevices.

Habitat: It grows best on moist, rich, low-lying ground, and may grow in pure stands or mixed stands with alders, willows, balsam fir, black spruce, white spruce, white birch and other species of the northern forests.

Medicinal uses: Rheumatism, chronic diarrhea, cholera infantum, jaundice, intermittent fever, liver, kidney troubles, hay fever, diabetes, influenza, neuralgia, la grippe. External use for cancers, bad ulcers, wounds, eczema, sciatica.

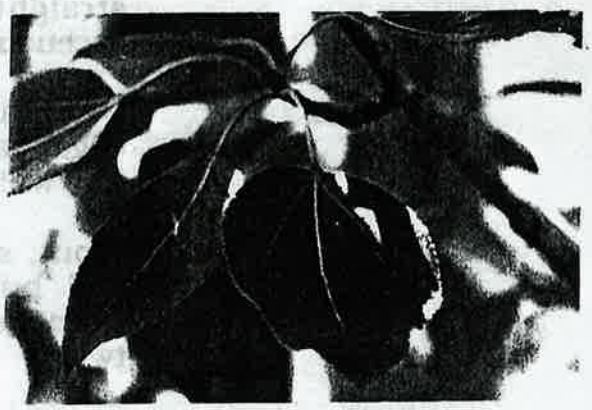
Other uses: Plywood, pulpwood, excelsior (stuffing or packing material for mattresses, sofas, chairs etc.).

Native uses: Heating/cooking, snowshoes (laced and wooden), toboggan, guards for tikinagan, gill net making tools (shuttle and mesher). Compressed ash was used to make bleach and lye soap. The bud was used as a painkiller for toothache.

NOTE: This tree belongs to the willow family, but is included with the trees because Natives consider it as a tree.

TREMBLING ASPEN





The leaves are sharp tipped, short, circular and are 1-3 inches long and 1 1/2" to 2" in diameter.



SIZE - A medium sized tree is 40-100 feet in height and and 6" to 2 feet in diameter.

Bark - The young tree has a smooth, waxy surface but as it matures, the bark splits and cracks open, usually at the base of the trunk.

TREMBLING ASPEN

Family group:	Willow Botanical name: Populus tremuloides
Common names:	Quaking aspen, white poplar, american aspen, golden aspen, mountain aspen, trembling poplar, popple
Size and form:	Medium size tree, up to 100 feet tall with a diameter up to 12 inches. The crown is short-rounded; the trunk is long cylindrical and tapered. Lower part of the tree is branch-free and smooth. Root system is shallow and very wide-spreading.
Needles/leaves:	Deciduous, nearly circular, about up to 2 inches in diameter with an abrupt short tip. Dark green on the surface and paler underneath and hairless, stalk is flattened, slender which is usually longer than the leaf-blade.
Twigs:	Slender, shiny, dark green or brownish gray, round in cross section. End buds are about 1/4 inch long, conical with sharp pointed tip, slender, hairless and dark reddish brown.
Bark:	Smooth with waxy appearance, young bark is pale green almost white turning gray and furrowed into flat ridges as it ages.
Habitat:	It is found on moist, well-drained sand, loam or gravel soils. When young, it forms pure stands and is shade intolerant. It can also be found among white spruce, black spruce, balsam fir, white birch, balsam poplar, and jack pine.
Medicinal uses:	Restores digestive disturbances, relieves headaches caused by stomach/liver conditions, faintness, hysteria, neuralgia, diabetes, hay fever, cholera, diarrhea, urine abstruction not due to prostatitis, skins conditions
Other uses:	It is used paper products and other forms of chipwood. It is also used for pulpwood, lumber for boxes, crates, excelsior and matches, veneer, plywood
Native uses:	It is used for heating because it creates less ash, and it is also used to make stretchers for pelts.
NOTE:	This tree belongs to the willow family, but is included with the trees because Natives consider it as a tree.

WILLOWS



WILLOWS

The willow family consist of two genera - **populus** (the poplars) and **salix** (the willows).

There are about 40 species of the poplar genus and over 300 species of willow genus throughout the north. About 80 species of willows and 10 poplars occur, excluding hybrids, in North America. All of the poplars are trees and about 34 of the willows are trees (or reach tree size) although many are large shrubs.

Trees or shrubs of this family group have bitter bark, soft, light, pale wood and scaly buds. Leaves are deciduous, simple, arranged alternately on branchlets (twigs). There are glands along the leafstalk margins. Individual trees bear either male or female flowers but seldom on the same tree. Male or female flowers are produced in separate catkins before leaves appear in early spring. Catkins contain several capsules with many small hairy seeds.

The slender, flexible, but often very brittle, twigs bear buds which are pressed against the stems. The roots are very close to the surface and are divided into several rootlets. Willows are usually found in moist wetlands such as swamps, riverbanks and streams but few can survive in well-drained upland soils.

Included in this unit are some of the willows that are found in the James Bay region. Bark from a certain willow is used by the Natives as a cleansing agent for cuts, sores and such. Dried or dead branches or twigs are used as fire starters, heating, and skewers just to name a few of the many uses.

Even today, some people while on the trapline, still use shavings of a specific willow for smoking in place of tobacco.

SHINING WILLOW

Family group: Willow Botanical name: Salix lucida

Common names: Shining willow

Description: Shining willow grows in wet soils along banks, streams and swamps. If it grows to about 13 feet high, it is known as a shrub, and as a small tree if it grows to about 26 feet. The trunk is 6 to 8 inches in diameter with upraised branches that form a broad, rounded crown. It has brown bark and light brown buds. Young branchlets (twigs) have rusty hairs that become shiny, hairless, yellowish to reddish brown as it ages.

The leaves are about 2 to 5 inches long, lance shaped with very long pointed tips. The base is rounded or wedge-shaped and the edges or margins are finely toothed. The upper surface is smooth, shiny and dark green and the under surface is paler and shiny. Young leaves have rusty hairs and are red-tinged.

Shining willow forms small pure stands or mixed stands with other willows, alder and balsam fir. Deer, moose, squirrels, rabbits and porcupine are some of the animals that eat the leaves, buds, catkins and bark.

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SANDBAR WILLOW

Family group: Willow Botanical name: salix exigua

Common names: Basket willow, coyote willow, narrow leaf willow, pink barked willow, rope plant, silver willow, slender leaf willow

Description: The sandbar willow is known as a spreading shrub or a small tree that grows to a height of 26 feet. It is found on fresh sandbars in rivers and streams. It can also be found in sandy, gravelly or mucky soils in and along water areas.

As soon as saplings have established themselves, they begin sending stolons (underground shoots) from which new branches sprout up very densely. The bark is thin and gray brown with branchlets that turn dark brown to almost black.

The long narrow lance-shaped leaves are 1 1/2 to 5 inches long and almost 1/2 inch wide with finely toothed margins or edges. The upper surface is blue green while the lower surface (the underneath) has white hairs when young and becomes smooth as it ages.

BEBB WILLOW

Family group: Willow Botanical name: Salix bebbiana

Common names: Beak willow, long beaked willow

Description: Bebb willow is a large shrub or small bushy tree that is found along streams, lakes and swamps, and may also be found in open meadows.

The tree or shrub grows to about 25 feet, sometimes taller. It has a round crown and a short trunk between 10 to 12 inches in diameter. The bark is smooth, gray turning rough and furrowed as it matures. The branches are stout and upturned while the branchlets are slender, wide and hairy when young turning smooth with age. The color ranges from reddish-brown to orange brown that turns paler as it get old. The winter buds are oblong, shiny brown with tapered blunt point.

The leaves are deciduous, 1 to 3 1/2 inch long, about 1 inch wide with broad middle and tapered tips, and smooth edges. The upper surface is dull green, and the under surface is silvery blue, hairy and have meshed veins.

It is a winter forage for moose and snowshoe rabbits. Grouse, whitetail deer, hare and beaver also depend on the buds, inner bark, wood and young shoots.

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HEART LEAVED WILLOW

Family group: Willow Botanical name: salix rigida

Common name: Erect willow

Description: This willow is a common multi-stemmed shrub or small tree that grows along streams, rivers, lakes, swamps and other wet sites.

It grows to about 30 feet high with a wide crown and a trunk can be 5 inches in diameter. The branchlets or twigs are reddish brown to yellowish green that carry reddish brown buds. The slender branchlets are hairy in spring becoming smooth in summer.

Leaves are lance shaped with sharp pointed tips, 3 to 6 inches long and 1/2 to 1 1/4 inch wide (the middle being the widest). The edges (margins) are finely toothed and the base is rounded, almost heart shaped. Upper surface is dark green while the under surface is bluish green.

SPECKLED ALDER

Family group: Birch Botanical name: Alnus rugosa

Common names; Alder, gray alder, hoary, mountain alder, red alder, river alder, rough alder or tag alder

Description: Speckled alder grows in wet sandy or gravelled soils usually along streams and rivers, but can be found near ponds and in swamps. It occurs in sunny open areas and cannot survive in densely shaded areas.

It is a shrub or small tree that grows to about 33 feet in height with a broad, irregular, rounded crown. The trunk usually has several crooked stems. The bark is dark reddish-brown, thin, smooth and marked with whitish pores. The branches are slender, crooked or twisted and spreading while the branchlets are slender, reddish-brown and smooth. The winter buds have rounded tips, about 1/2 inch long and covered with overlapping dark reddish-brown scales.

The leaves are deciduous, dark green, 2 to 4 inches long, and 1 to 1 1/2 inch wide, widest near the base. They have pointed tips and toothed edges or margins. The upper surface is wrinkled and the under surface is covered with rusty red hairs.

It grows in mixed stands with hazel alder, dogwood, willows, and red maple. Ptarmigan and sharped tailed grouse depend on the buds while rabbits, deer, and moose live on the twigs.

NOTE: This shrub belongs to the birch family but is included with the willows because Natives consider it as a willow.

PUSSY WILLOW

Family group: Willow Botanical name: salix discolor

Common names: Gluacous willow, pussyfeet

Description: The appearance of little "pussyfeet" on the branchlets of this small, often shrubby, tree is a sign of spring. It grows best in moist soils in meadows and along lakes and streams.

Pussy willow is a small tree that rarely reaches 26 feet. It has an open rounded crown and a trunk with a diameter about 12 inches. Sometimes it is a shrub with many tall straggling stems. The bark is thin and light brown tinged with red. The trunk is thin and scaly. Branches are stout and upright with branchlets that are dark reddish-purple and downy at the early stages becoming smooth as it matures. Winter buds are about 1/4 inch long, shiny, dark reddish-purple.

Leaves are deciduous, thin, firm, 2 to 5 inches long, about 1/2 to 1 1/2 inches wide, broadest in the middle, lance shaped, pointed tips. It has toothed edges or margins and the base is rounded or wedge-shaped. The upper surface is bright green and the under surface is blue-green.

Although it forms pure stands, it is found among other willow, cottonwood and silver maple. The buds and shoots are food for small animals such as squirrels, rabbits and other rodents while the bark and branchlets are eaten by deer in "hard" winters.

HIGHBUSH CRANBERRY

Family group: Honeysuckle Botanical name: Virburnum Opulus
Virburnum Trilobum

Common names: Snowball tree, guelder rose, squaw bush, pimbina, cramp bark, whitten-tree

Description: There are several species of highbush cranberries in North America, none of which are true cranberries. Rather, they are members of the genus viburnum, of the honeysuckle family. They grow in low rich lands, cool open woods, along streams, brook banks, rocky slopes, borders of fields, and old stumps.

Highbush cranberry is a large coarse shrub that grows to 12 feet or more and has a gray-brown bark. The leaves are short stalked with broadly toothed margins or edges. The three-lobed leaves change from green to bright colors in fall. The upper surface is shiny and crinkly and both sides are either hairy or hairless. The stem is from yellowish-gray and smooth to gray and slightly rough with raised spots. The fruit is very red, acidic, juicy and contains a single flat pit per fruit.

Medicinal uses: Rich source of vitamins C and K, antispasmodic, nervine, tonic, astringent, diuretic.

Native uses; Berries are used to make jam or jelly. Some Natives also used the bark and roots for general body pains, cramps, mumps and bladder problems.

NOTE: This shrub belongs to the honeysuckle family, but it is included with the willows because Natives consider it as a willow.

CHOKE CHERRY





The leaves which are about 3 to 4 inches in length have jagged edges and are broad, oval shaped, with sharp short tips. Berries which bloom in late August are bright red and turn deep red before falling off.

SIZE - Although it is mainly classified as a shrub, the tree can grow to be 30 feet in height, and 6 inches in diameter.

BARK - The young tree has a smooth scaly, dark greyish-brown bark. As the tree matures, it turns almost black.

CHOKE CHERRY

Family group: Rose Botanical name: Prunus virginiana

Common names: Wild black cherry bark, choke cherry, black cherry, black choke, rub cherry, cabinet cherry,

Description: The plant is a large shrub or small tree that grows to 20 feet in height with an irregular rounded crown. The trunk is 8 inches in diameter and often crooked. The branches are small and erect while the branchlets are slender, shiny and reddish brown turning dark with age. It has a thick, smooth and reddish brown bark.

The leaves are deciduous and oval shaped, 3 to 4 inches long with jagged edges and short tips. The upper surface is dark green, shiny and smooth while the under surface is light green. Berries which bloom in late August are bright red and turn deep red before falling.

Choke cherry can be found in moist soils in open areas along roadsides and borders of woods. It grows among pin cherry, aspen, paper birch, northern red oak, and red maple.

Medicinal uses: Tones up the system, loosens phlegm, good for colds, grippe, tuberculosis, stomach troubles, dysentery, fevers, asthma, high blood pressure, hemorrhoids, used to help ease labor pains and various ailments.

Native uses: Some Natives used the bark and twigs for medicinal purposes as a poultice or a tea. Cherries were eaten raw or dried for future use. They were also used in soups, stews, or mixed with meat or pemmican.

NOTE: This shrub belongs to the Rose family but is included with the willows because Natives consider it as a willow.

PLANTS



PLANTS

Our Elders in their wisdom tells us for every ailment, there is a cure that can be found in the land. The land is our pharmacy.

Before the arrival of modern medicine as we know it today, our Elders have relied on plants and herbs. Some were used to ease the pain and heal the wounds, while others, because of their vitamin and mineral content, were used to add flavour to foods or eaten to promote general good health. Each plant or herb has health enhancing properties with a particular value in the treatment of a specific ailment.

There is an incredible variety of plants and herbs with various colours, shapes, textures and scents. Included in this booklet are some of the wild plants that are common in our region. Some of them we would normally consider as weeds and worthless are in fact beneficial.

NOTE: You must always consult your family doctor before using any plants or herbs for medicinal or food purposes. There are poisonous or harmful plants in our region that could cause complications or reactions if taken internally or externally. For this reason we have excluded the methods and ingredients of traditional medicine. The medicinal uses of the plants were mentioned for interest only.

DANDELION



DANDELION

Family group: Composite Botanical Name: Taraxacum officinale

Common Names: Blowball, doon head, clock, piss-a-bed, canker wort, priest's crown, lion's tooth, swine snout, puff ball, wild endive etc. (There are other names used in different parts of the world.)

Description: The dandelion is a common plant often regarded as a weed. It is found in meadows, roadsides, pastures, fields and lawns. But in actuality, it is a perennial plant that is classified as an herb.

It is a sturdy little plant that grows to about 17 inches high. The stem or stalk is slender, hollow, milky, pinkish green and hairy. The leaves are deep green, variously shaped, grow at the base of the stem and the edges are sharply jagged. The upper surface is smooth and the under surface has reddish veins that are branching outwards. The stems bear single heads of tiny, tongued-shaped yellow flowers and reflexed outer bracts. The flowerheads open wide in the morning and close in the evening. When mature, these flower heads turn into downy white balls of seeds, each with its own parachute that is carried away by the wind.

The flower and green leaves are nutritious and contain a high source of vitamin A. It also has thiamin, riboflavin, vital ascorbic, calcium, sodium and potassium and is, therefore, used for a variety of medicinal purposes.

Medicinal uses: Blood purifier, headaches, bilious attack, gall stones, night sweats, excellent remedy for jaundice, skin diseases, scurvy, scrofula, eczema, liver and kidney troubles, heartburn, diabetes, dropsy, bowel inflammation, rheumatism, digestive disturbances and fever. It increase the activity of liver, spleen and pancreas.

Uses as food: Greens are used for salads and as a substitute for vegetables, coffee, and tea. It is an excellent source of iron, protein, calcium, and phosphorous.

Native uses: Dandelion was used as food and medicine source.

CATTAIL (Bulrushes)



CATTAIL

Family group: Typhaceae Botanical Name: typha latifolia

Common name: Cattails, bulrushes, flags, reed mace

Description: The bulrushes are perennial plants that grow in marshes, shallow waters and damp ditches. They are approximately 3 to 5 feet in height and are easily recognizable from the long, flat, reedlike leaves and long, brown, fuzzy, cylindrical flower spikes. These cylindrical flower spikes are about 2 inches in diameter and from 4 to 6 inches long.

One of most useful, the plant is high in carbohydrates. The stem and roots can be eaten and other parts of the plant can be used for various medicinal purposes.

Uses for food: Tender cores of young plants are used as a green salad or a vegetable. When the pollen spike is partly developed, it can be boiled and eaten like corn on cob. Ripe pollen can be shaken off and added to wheat flour because of high protein. In the early spring, young shoots can be eaten. Nutritious flour can be made from rootstock. Sap can be used as a candy.

Other uses: Down from developed heads is can be used as a stuffing for garments, mattresses, comforters, pillows, and as a filler for life preservers. Twisted cattail leaves are prime material for making rush seats. In the summer, young flowers stalks can be added to bouquets.

Native uses: The down of the spike, mixed with animal grease, is used as healing poultice for cuts, bruises and burns. Roots are used to make a gargle for soar throat; spike down is used as a compress; dried stalks are used for making mats and bags.

FIREWEED



FIREWEED

Family group: Evening primrose Botanical Name: Eretchites augustifolium

Common Name: Pilewort, various leaved fleabane, willow herb, Indian wicopy, purple fire top.

Description: The fireweed grows in waste places, burned-over areas, disturbed land, and moist soils. It is a perennial herb with unbranched stems that grow 2-6 feet tall and bear magenta (red) flowers on long spikes. The stem is sturdy, angled, smooth and could be green or deep pink. The leaves are numerous, narrow, long tapering at both ends. They have smooth, dark green upper surface, grayish green under surface and margins or edges that are wavey.

Medicinal uses: Diminishing accumulation of mucous membranes, colon troubles, cholera, dysentery, blood purifier, common cold, allergies, hay fever, tonsillitis, hemorrhoids

Uses as food: Young roots are used as greens when cooked, or used in salad; flower stalks, while still in bud, can be eaten raw or cooked; pith is used in soups; dried leaves are used as tea.

Other uses: Cotton from seed pods is used as tinder

Native uses: Because of the high vitamin C content, it was used as an anti scorbutic (preventing scurvy) and the pith was also eaten because of the vitamins and sweetness.

LABRADOR TEA



Labrador Tea

Family group: Heath

Botanical name: Ledum latifolium

Common names: James tea, marsh tea, wild rosemary, continental tea

Description: This is a small ever green shrub that is found in most parts of northern Ontario. It thrives well in tundras, swamps, bogs, damp open areas and moist meadows. This multi-branched plant grows to about 2 feet high. The stem is woody and, when new , is woolly, greenish gradually turning golden brown. The stem turns dark and scaly as it ages. The leaves are narrow, thick, 1 to inches long and blunt. The edges/rims are untoothed and rolled under. The upper surface is olive green and leathery while the under surface is woolly. The first year plants are grayish underneath, and more of a rusty reddish brown in mature foilage.

Because the leaves contain a high source of vitamin C, they can be used for a variety of medicinal purposes.

Medicinal uses: The leaves are used for bronchial and pulmonary affections, cough and colds. Slave/ointment is made from the plant to control itching and other skin diseases.

Native uses: The leaves are used to make tea. Crumple dried leaves, mixed with animal fat, is used to make salve for skin conditions.

RASPBERRY



RASPBERRY

Family group: Rose

Botanical name: Rubus idaeus

Common names: American raspberry, wild red raspberry,

Description: The wild raspberry grows in wastelands, open woods and pastures. It is a perennial shrub that grows from 3 to 6 feet high. The upright canes or stems are biennial rising from perennial rootstock. In their first year, they are branchless and flowerless. Short branches which bear flowers develop in the second year, then it dies, but new shoots come up from the root. The stem is golden to brown, semi-woody and prickly. The leaves are sharply toothed, bright green with a crinkly, downy upper-surface and silvery under-surface with branching veins. The berries are in rounded clusters of shiny druplets, deep red, very sweet and fragrant.

When picked fresh, the fruit of this plant has a rich source of vitamin C. However, when picked in large quantities, the berries must be frozen immediately or the warm temperature will destroy the vitamin C. The juice from the berries is used for variety of medicinal purposes.

Medicinal uses: It is used for dysentery and diarrhea. It removes cankers from mucous membranes while toning the tissue on the throat and alimentary tract. It decreases menstrual flow without stopping it. It eases nausea. It has a soothing relief on urethral irritation, kidneys, ducts, urinary tracts

Native uses: Berries are used to make jam or jelly or eat the berries fresh from the plant.

BLUEBERRY



BLUEBERRY

Family group:	Heath	Botanical name:	Vaccinium angustifolium

Common name: Low-bush blueberry,

Description: This is low-growing shrub, usually about 1 foot tall, that grows in dense colonies because of its intertwining roots. Leaves are about 1 inch long, rounded, leathery, and have smooth edges. The leaves are reddish-purple in exposed areas and deep red in autumn. It has white flowers that form in clusters and are about 1/4/4 inch long. Berries are green at the beginning turning pink, reddish purple as it matures and becoming dark blue-purple when ripe.

Blueberries grow in dry, acidic soil, rocky or sandy open terrain, near peat bogs, hillsides, and burnt over areas.

Medicinal uses: Diarrhea, blood purifier, spring tonic, bladder and kidney problems, sore throat, abnormal intestinal discharges.

Other uses: Blueberries are used to make jams, jellies, pies and various desserts.

Native uses: Dye

NOTE; Blueberries belong to the genus Vaccinium, a large category of plants which include various blueberries, bilberries, cranberries and others. There are two types of blueberries in North America - high bush and low bush, both have several species.

WATER LILY



WATER LILY

Family group: Water lily

Botanical name: Nymphaea odorata
Nuphar variegatum

Common names: Water nymph, fragrant water lily, sweet-scented water lily, water cabbage, toad-lily, lotus, cow lily,

Description: Water lily is an aquatic perennial that grows from an underwater stem which is buried in the mud and sends down rootlets for anchorage.

The white water lily, nymphaea odorata, is found in marshy streams, lakes and rivers. The leaves are about 5 - 9 inches long and 4 - 7 inches wide. The surface is deep olive green and shiny while the under surface is reddish purple. The leaf is round, leathery with a cleft almost to its centre and a multipetaled white blossom, which is in bloom between June and September.

The yellow pond lily, found in still freshwater, slow streams and tidal waters, has heart-shaped leaves and produces a cup-shaped yellow blossom which blooms from May to October.

Medicinal uses: Bowel complaints, gargle for sore throat, lotion for boils, sores, and ulcers.

Uses as food: Bottom part of the plant and its roots, which have a high content of starch, is edible and is used as a nutrient

Native uses: Natives in various areas use the plant for various medicinal purposes.

CANADIAN GOLDENROD



CANADIAN GOLDENROD

Family group: Composite

Botanical name: Solidago canadensis

Common names: Sweet scented golden rod, blue mountain tea

Description: The Canadian goldenrod is a common perennial herb that grows both in open fields and woodland areas. It can be found in dry to moist areas, roadsides, fields, streambanks, clearings, disturbed areas and thickets.

It has plume-like floral branches with massed clusters of small golden flower heads which tend to grow on one side of the branch. The leaves, which are narrow, smooth, lance-shaped, are crowded on the stem. The edges or margins are sharply-toothed. The plant can grow up to 5 feet tall. Both the leaves and stem are smooth to fine down. Goldenrod can be found in dry to moist areas, roadsides, streambanks, fields, clearings, disturbed areas and thickets.

Medicinal uses: Carminative, stimulant, astringent, diaphoretic, vitamin C, tea, promotes perspiration, used to dissolve stones in the bladder.

Native uses: Various medicinal uses.

COMMON THISTLE



CANADA THISTLE

Family group: Composite

Botanical name: Cirsium arvense

Common name: Different areas may have common names for the plant.

Description: Actually this plant is a native of Europe and it is our most common thistle. It grows in dense patches in pastures, road sides, waste places, meadows and fields. It is a perennial plant that blooms from June to October. The stems are 6 inches to 4 feet high, shiny. yellow-green and ridged. This hairless, much-branched plant has numerous, small, often clustered, fragrant, pale lilac flower heads that are about 1/2 inch to 1 inch wide. The leaves are spiny-toothed with shiny upper surface and woolly under surface.

Medicinal uses: Good nutritional source

Uses as food: Roots, when roasted, are sweet, and peeled young flower stems can be added to salads (raw or cooked) or used in stews.

Native uses: Unknown

FERN



OSTRICH FERN

Family group: Fern

Botanical Name: Pteretis nodulosa

Common Names: Fern

Description: Many people prefer the name "fiddleheads" rather than ostrich fern. Locally, the term "fiddleheads" refers solely to the young, tightly coiled fronds of the ostrich fern. They are found in very rich soils in stream beds, on fertile slopes and in rich-soiled valleys and fields. The ostrich fern has a multi-branched, perennial rootstock which spreads rapidly underground. New fronds have brown broad scales which are very fine and have a delicate leafy top. They can be collected by pinching the young fronds off as low as possible or by cutting without getting in to the tough tissue. Once the fronds have started to open, they are no longer edible.

Medicinal uses: Unknown

Native uses: Fiddleheads are used for a side dish as a vegetable or in salads.

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