



Wild Botanicals Picking Guidelines: Key Facts to Know

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Core Principles of Sustainable Picking



Harvesting must ensure long-term population stability. Correctly identify species and respect their conservation status. Collection areas must be legally and sustainably managed.



Prevent ecological harm and support biodiversity. Regularly assess the impact of collection on habitats and adjust practices to maintain ecosystem balance.



Harvest at a rate that allows plant populations to regenerate naturally. Monitor species conservation status and adopt practices to ensure long-term availability.



Avoid damaging non-target species and fragile ecosystems. Implement harvesting techniques that protect biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.

Picking Limits

The specific picking limits i.e. how much can be picked without damaging the plant and allowing it to regenerate, vary depending on the plant and its recovery rate. However here are the internationally recognized limit ranges for sustainable harvesting of various plant parts.

Leaves	Harvest only 30-50% per plant/season to allow plants to regenerate and continue growing.
Flowers	Pick only 10-20% of flowers/plant to support pollination, biodiversity, and seed production.
Roots & Bulbs	Collect only 20-30% to prevent plant depletion and ensure regrowth.
Fruits	Take up to only 30% , leaving enough for seed dispersal and wildlife while ensuring plant reproduction
Seeds	Gather only 10-20% to maintain natural reproduction and genetic diversity.
Shoots & Sprouts	Harvest only 10-15% of the plant's biomass to avoid over-extraction and support future growth.
Stems	Cut up to only 30% , ensuring the plant structure remains intact for regrowth and future harvesting.

General Picking Rules



Site Selection

Prioritize picking areas with healthy, abundant populations.

Avoid over-harvesting by only picking the allowable harvesting percentage.

Path Selection and Entry/Exit

Choose one specific path to enter and exit the picking area to minimize disturbance to the surrounding vegetation and reduce soil erosion.

Start picking from the bottom of the slope to prevent soil erosion and reduce the risk of plant damage.



Harvesting Techniques

Pick Healthy, High-Quality Plants.

Focus on harvesting only the best specimens.

Utilize efficient, minimal-impact harvesting methods to reduce plant stress and promote regrowth.

Gradually, start picking from the outer layers of the plant and move inwards to help maintain the plant's structure and encourage continued growth.

Soil and Weather Considerations

Avoid soil compaction during harvesting to promote healthy root development and plant growth.

Do not harvest in wet conditions to avoid soil compaction, plant damage and disease spread.

Wear appropriate protective gear for varying weather conditions.

Monitor weather patterns and adjust harvesting schedules to avoid extreme conditions.

Consider plant responses to climate stressors when planning harvests.

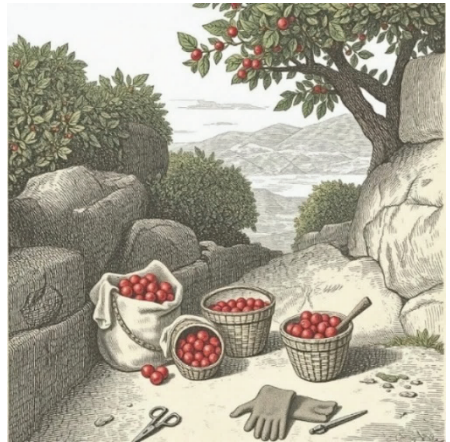
Handling and Equipment

Handle Tools Carefully and disinfect them before and after use to prevent the transfer of pathogens and make precise cuts with sharp, clean tools.

Picked plant materials should not touch the ground to prevent contamination and maintain their quality.

Avoid using plastic bags or containers as they trap heat and moisture, leading to spoilage of the plant materials.

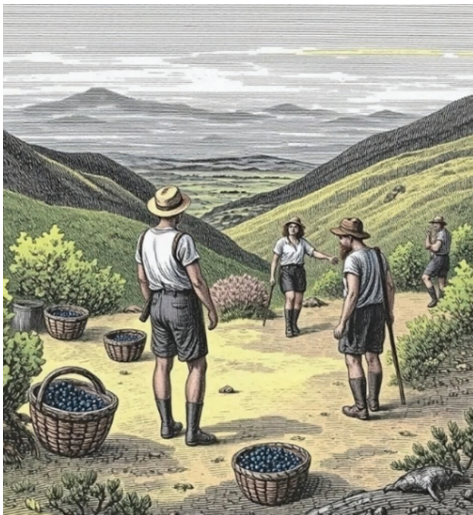
Avoid excessive pressure or compaction of the harvested botanicals to prevent damage and preserve their quality.



Use breathable, natural materials for packaging to allow airflow, help preserve freshness and reduce spoilage.

Proper Disposal of Diseased Material. Immediately remove and dispose of any diseased plants away from the picking area to prevent contamination of healthy plants.

Environmental Stewardship



Minimize Disturbance to Ecosystems by avoiding damage to surrounding plant life and wildlife.

Support Local Conservation and Habitat Restoration. Actively participate in and promote habitat restoration and other local conservation efforts where the opportunity arises.

Adapt to Climate Change by adjusting your harvesting schedules, selecting resilient plant species, and minimizing negative environmental effects to ensure a sustainable harvest in the face of changing conditions.

Share Best Practices with other pickers to strengthen collective management of local natural resources.

Home Drying Techniques for Wild Botanicals

Proper drying is essential for preserving the quality, nutritional value, and potency of wild botanicals, spices, and herbs.

Preparation Before Drying

Remove any dirt, damaged parts, or insects. Rinse gently if necessary and pat dry to remove excess moisture.

Spread plant materials in a single layer to ensure even drying and prevent spoilage. Avoid overcrowding.

Site Selection and Drying Environment



Choose a well-ventilated, shaded area protected from direct sunlight.

Maintain consistent airflow to prevent mould and spoilage.

Avoid drying in damp or humid environments.

Keep drying areas clean and free from contaminants such as dust, smoke and strong odors that may alter the plants' natural properties.

Drying Methods and Techniques

Air Drying: Suitable for leafy herbs, flowers, and delicate botanicals. Bundle small bunches together and hang them upside down in a dry, shaded place.

Screen Drying: Ideal for fruits, berries, and roots. Spread the materials evenly on mesh screens, ensuring adequate airflow from all sides.

Low-Temperature Drying: When using an oven or dehydrator, keep temperatures below 40°C to preserve active compounds and prevent overheating.

Duration and Monitoring

Drying time varies depending on the plant type, thickness, humidity, and airflow. Leaves, flowers and spices may dry within 3–10 days, while roots and fruits may take longer.

Rotate or turn the drying materials periodically to ensure uniform drying and avoid moisture pockets.

Plant materials are dry when; leaves crumble easily, roots snap cleanly, and fruits are leathery yet firm.



Storage and Handling

Store dried botanicals in airtight, opaque containers to protect against light, moisture, and pests.

Use glass, paper, or breathable fabric bags for storage rather than plastic, which can trap residual moisture and cause spoilage.

Label each batch with the plant name and drying date to track freshness and quality over time.

Store in a cool, dark place away from heat sources and humidity to maximize shelf life and potency.

By following these drying principles, rural harvesters can maintain the integrity and value of their botanicals, ensuring they are suitable for personal use or commercial sale whilst preserving product quality, minimizing waste and maximizing income.

Picking Rules for Different Plant Parts

Plant parts	How & when to pick	Tools used for picking
Leaves	Harvest selectively , ensuring that only a portion of the leaves are taken to maintain plant health.	Pruning shears and/or scissors - ensure clean cuts to minimize damage and allow the plant to regenerate quickly.
Flowers	Harvest at peak bloom for optimal fragrance, color, and market value.	Floral snips and/or scissors - allow for precise cutting, which minimizes damage to the flowers and stems.
Roots	Harvest during the plant's dormant season to minimize stress and damage to the plant. Carefully dig around roots to avoid cutting or bruising them.	Hand trowel and/or digging fork - gently lift roots with minimal disturbance to the surrounding soil.
Rhizomes	Harvest mature rhizomes while leaving part of the plant undisturbed to regenerate.	Digging fork and/or sharp knife - loosen soil gently and make clean cuts to avoid damaging the plant.
Tubers	Harvest tubers after the plant's growth cycle has completed , ensuring they are fully developed.	Hand trowel and/or digging fork - use carefully to extract tubers without damage.
Bulbs	Harvest when the plant is dormant , ensuring the bulb is fully matured. Allow the bulbs to dry before storing.	Digging fork and/or hand spade - gently lift bulbs to avoid crushing.
Fruits	Harvest fruit when it is fully ripe to ensure maximum flavor and nutritional value. Handle gently to prevent bruising or damage.	Hands and soft-lined baskets - to protect fruit during collection and transport.
Seeds	Collect mature, dry seeds from healthy plants to ensure high germination rates and strong disease-resistant seedlings.	Hands and small containers - to ensure the seeds are organized and dry, preventing damage and maintaining their quality.
Shoots & Sprouts	Harvest young shoots before they become tough or woody and avoid overharvesting.	Sharp knife and/or scissors - make precise cuts to ensure regrowth.
Stems	Selectively harvest stems to allow the plant to regenerate and avoid overharvesting. Harvest when the plant is not actively flowering or fruiting to reduce stress.	Pruning shears and/or sharp knife - ensure clean, controlled cuts to maintain plant health.

