# Listening to the story of a single plant:

# Devil's Club

Once upon a time, about thirty years ago…..at the age of thirty, I found a large sheltered area of devil's club, which saved me from being attacked by brownies near Mt. Iliamna.

**Thank you, Creator, for providing us with such a powerful plant: one with so many uses - but most of all, which provides shelter for animals (and sometimes silly people.)**

## The Story of Devil's Club can teach us many things:

**Every plant's life is a journey**

**Land stewardship**

**Sustainable harvesting**

**Listening to plants**

Fast forward twenty years:

# Scientific Research

## Devil's Club

*Oplopanax horridus*

**Ginseng Family (Araliaciae)**

**Oplo means "weapon" in Greek**

**Panax is from pan, meaning "everything"**

**Horridus means "bristly" or "wild"**

**Dena'ina: *heshkeghka'a* "big, big prickle"**

**Deciduous shrub**

**Can be 5 – 10 ft. tall**

**Thorns or stiff, slender spines cover stems, leaf petioles, and veins on leaf surfaces.**

## Leaves usually start to emerge in late May, early June

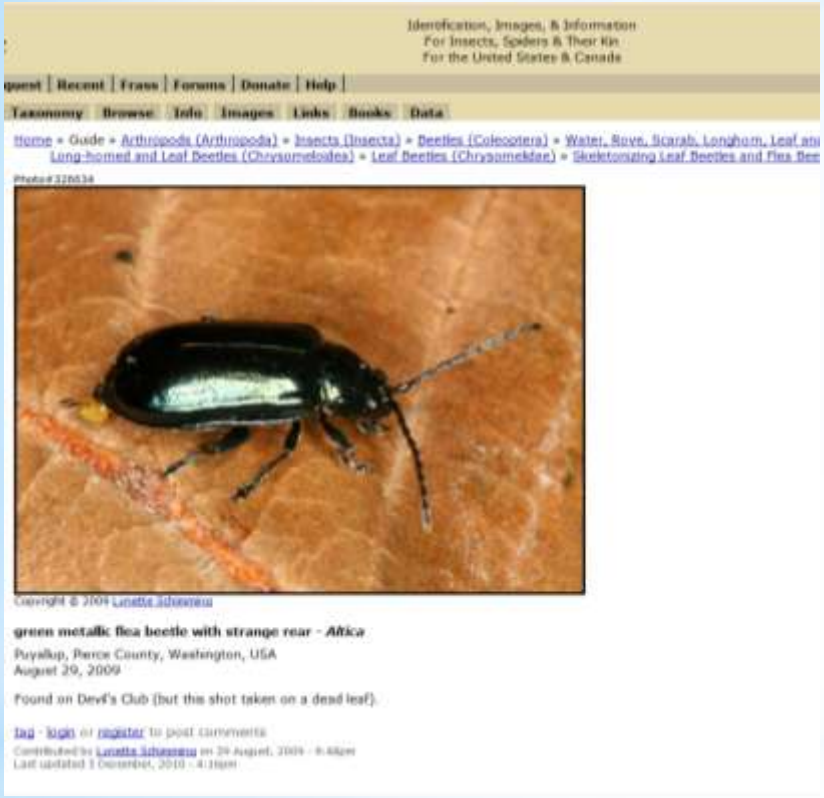
**How old is a stem?**

**At top of each stem is a crown of large leaves**
**Leaves are maple-shaped, with irregularly lobed margins.**
**Each leaf is borne on long basally swollen petioles (stems)**

**The inflorescence is called a terminal umbelliferous raceme. Individual flowers are small, made up of a greenish white corolla of 5 petals. 5 stamens and 2 stigmas (usually). Late July.**

# Pollination appears to occur via brownish beetles.

***I don't know.***




**Berries are somewhat flattened. The styles are persistent.**

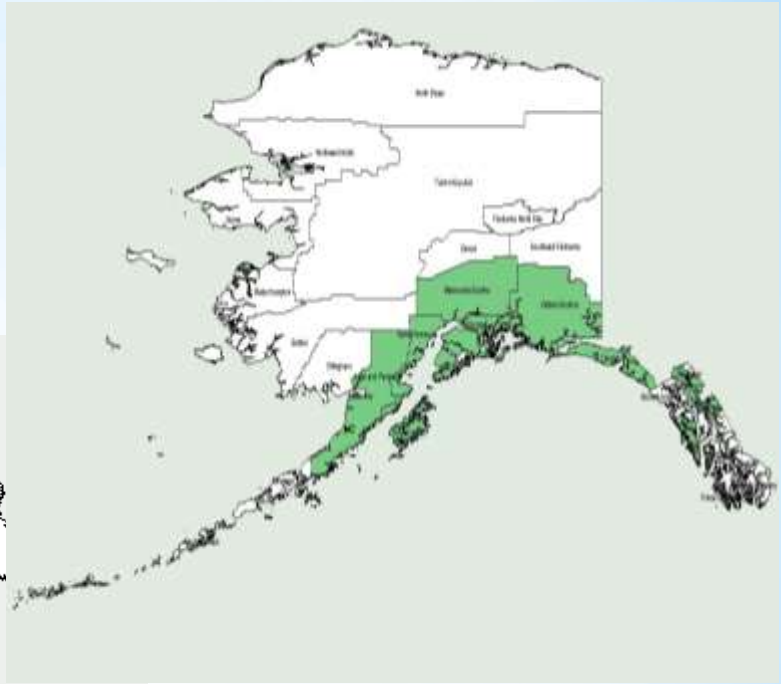
**Berries red when ripe. Within the berries are usually 2 tan seeds.**

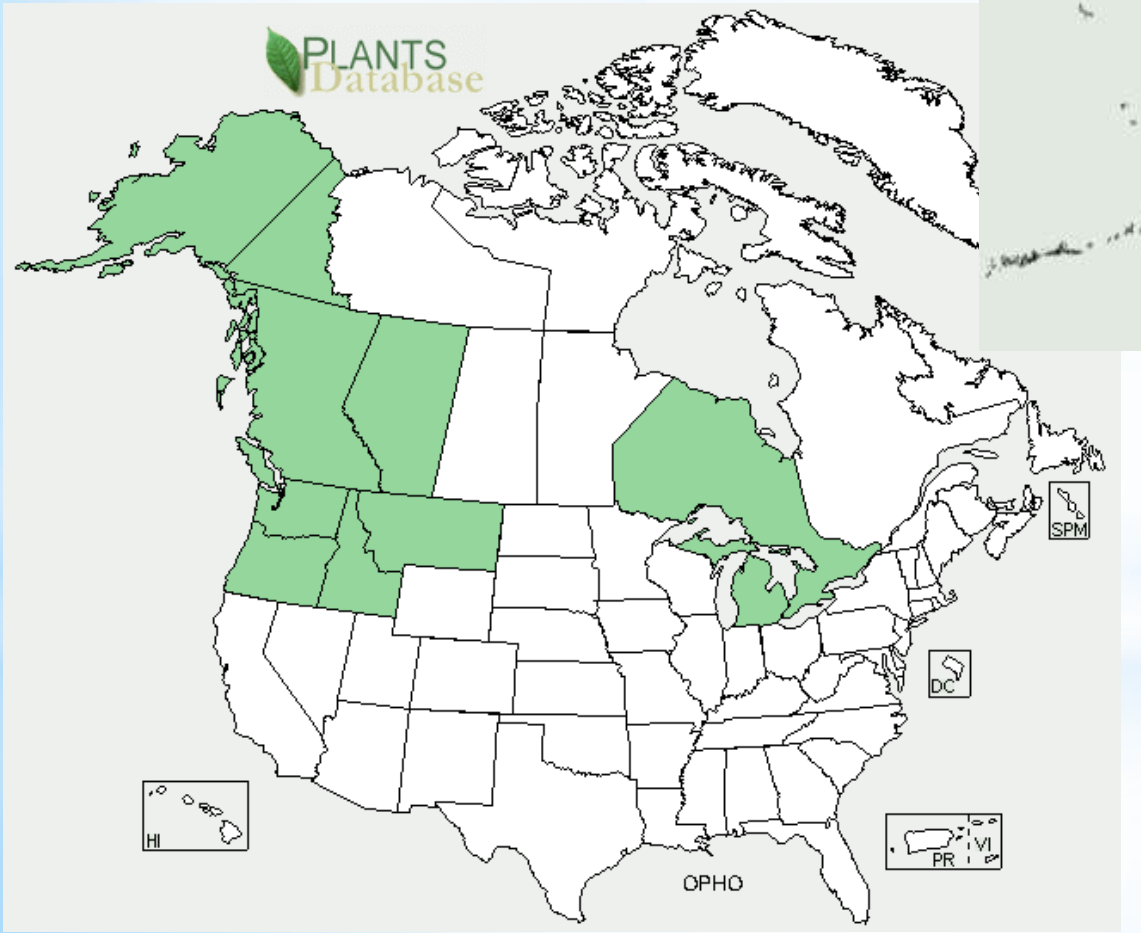
**Where is Devil's Club found?**

**Forest areas, shade and sun**

**Mid to low elevations**

**Moist areas, stream banks**





**Back to the story:**

**Devil's Club seeds are not the way this plant survives and thrives.**

**My babies are now 8 years old. They are still living, but not like wild ones do.**

## Is there a better way to propagate Devil's Club?

## Devil's Club is Clonal.

**A clonal colony a group of genetically identical individuals, that have grown in a given location,**

**all originating vegetatively, not sexually, from a single ancestor.**

**What other plants are clonal colonies here in Alaska?**

Quaking Aspen

Salmonberry

Salal

Alder

Club moss

Grasses

Bunchberry

Blueberry

How to tell the age of a stem?

How about the colony?

**Is there a difference between a colony found in an old growth forest and a newly disturbed area?**

**What energy allotment would be best for Devil's Club in a shaded area? More growth of individuals. Forage for light, actively growing and sprawling towards light.**

**Devil's Club does not do well in clear-cutted forests.**

**What happens to the colony when a tree falls down?**

**How about a new sunny area? More stems.**

**Flexibility in growth…different size leaves, leaf orientation**

**My interest in Devil's Club continues towards understanding the colony's ecology and how harvest affects the colony.**

**I use Devil's Club bark in a tea throughout the year. I also make a salve from the bark for my hands. I eat the new buds.**

**I do not want to hurt the colony or its environment. I thank the plant every time I cut some down.**

**How sensitive to harvest or disruption is a clonal colony?**

**Devil's Club responds to normal disturbances by increasing branching and lateral bud production.**

**It can regenerate after disturbance by sharing resources within the clonal fragment.**

**Everybody is careful when they go among Devil's Club.**

**Winter, 2013**
**Stems caught in dogs' hair.**
**Pieces one of my dog chewed up.**

**Traditional medicinal uses from literature:**

**Arthritis, Rheumatism, Diabetes**

**Respiratory ailments, Coughs, Colds**

**Sores, Swellings, Cuts, Boils**

**Emetic, Laxative**

**Aid in child-birth, internal hemorrhaging**

**Analgesic, treat stomach and digestive disorders**

**Broken bones, fever, dandruff, lice, headaches**

**Internal infections, treatment for cancer**

**Antimicrobial, Antimycobacterial, Antifungal, Antiviral**

**Cleansing, purification**

**Medicinal cannot be separated from spiritual.**

**Many people use and have used Devil's Club.**

**Some use it for their own purpose or to help their families.**

**Others are marketing it for sale.**

## Sitka is center of Alaska's devil's club business

*by* **Ed Schoenfeld, CoastAlaska**

October 12, 2012 4:09 pm

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Back Bay Botanicals products include devil's club soothing rub and healing ointment. Photo by Ed Schoenfeld.

CoastAlaska News - Devil's club 0:00

Listen to iFriendly audio.

Devil's club is probably best known as a plant to avoid at all costs. But several small Southeast Alaska companies have a different take. They're turning the roots, stems and bark of the plant into rubs and salves to treat sore joints and damaged skin.

Sitka is the center of the growing industry.

Back Bay Botanicals' Dennis Longstreth enjoys hearing from the customers.

"Every so often there will be a little envelope in the mail, with a tight little handwritten address and we open it up and there'll be a letter saying somebody gave her this product and it did wonders for her," he says.

So why is Sitka a center of devil's club products?

Wintersong's Ruth McMaster says it's all about attitudes.

"There's a lot of independent people here who are seeking out ways to make money besides working for someone else. There's a lot of entrepreneurs and crafters and artists. I think it goes along with the type of people who live here."

A few years ago, some Tlingit leaders were concerned large-scale operations could lead to overharvesting of the traditional plant. So far, that doesn't appear to have happened.

Access websites of some of Alaska devil's club product producers:

- Back Bay Botanicals, Sitka
  Wintersong, Sitka
  Pauline Duncan, Sitka (scroll down to see products)
- Gut' Shu wu Inc., Hoonah
  Alaska Botanicals, Hoonah
  Laughing Berry Botanicals, Metlakatla
  Maiden Alaska Herbs, Skagway
  Birch Grove, Eagle River
  Alaska Ginseng, Chugiak
  Alaska Rod's, Haines

**Turner reports over 30 categories of medicinal, spiritual, and technological uses of devil's club by over 25 different linguistic groups across North America.**

# Non-Timber Forest Products

## Forms and Registration

- End-of-Season Report Form via mail
- End-of-Season Report Form online
- Permit Registration via mail: (Minimum: **$100.00** )
- Permit Registration online: (Minimum: **$100.00** )

## Maps

- DNR Management Regions
  - Northern Region
  - Southcentral Region
  - Southeast Region

## Information Resources

- Alaska NTFP Harvest Manual
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
- Generally Allowed Uses on State Land
- Program Contacts
- R.S. 2477 Rights-of-Way

## Regulations

- 11 AAC .05.010 Fees
- 11 AAC 96.030 Application
- 11 AAC 96.035 Commercial Harvest of NTFPs
- 11 AAC 96.250 Definitions


Blueberries


Burls


Devil's Club


Morel Mushroom

## Introduction

In July 2008, the Division of Mining, Land and Water changed the regulations (listed above) to authorize commercial harvesting of non-timber forest products (NTFP) on state lands through an over-the-counter authorization. Previously commercial harvesting required a regular land use permit. Pursuant with the change, commercial harvesting of non-timber forest products, up to certain quantities of harvest, now can be permitted through the Department of Natural Resources Limited Non-timber Forest Product Permit.

The change accomplishes two objectives: 1) it streamlines the permitting process, taking less time for staff and applicants and 2) it allows DNR to better manage these natural resources to ensure a sustainable harvest for all Alaskans. Much effort was placed in developing a Harvest Manual that sets appropriate limits of harvest per harvestable species and provides correct harvest protocol to protect the environment and maintain a sustainable harvest.

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## Frequently Asked Question's (FAQ's)

**What are "Non-Timber Forest Products"?**
Non-timber Forest Products are generally defined as products derived from biological resources. Some examples include mushrooms, berries, bark, burls, conks, cones, boughs, diamond willow, landscaping transplants, and sap. Not included are rocks, minerals, soil, water, animals, or animal parts. Timber products include saw logs, poles, house logs, firewood, and Christmas trees. Harvest of timber products is permitted through the local Alaska Division of Forestry office.

**Do I need a permit to harvest Non-Timber Forest Products?**
No permit is required to harvest reasonable quantities of Non-Timber Forest Products for personal use. If you are harvesting NTFPs for commercial purposes you will need a "Limited Non-Timber Forest Products Commercial Harvest Permit".

Commercial use is defined as harvesting NTFPs for the primary purpose of sale, resale, or use in a

# Alaska Non-Timber Forest Products Harvest Manual

*For Commercial Harvest on State-Owned Lands*


**State of Alaska**
**Department of Natural Resources**
**Division of Mining, Land and Water**

April 2, 2008

**Timing of harvest depends on who you talk to.**

**Some harvest year round**

**Some harvest only in the spring**

**Some harvest only in the fall**

**Harvesting during dormancy has a smaller impact on regeneration the next year.**

**Some harvest early in the morning only on stems which have the sun shining on them.**

**Some walk past first large clump of devil's club before harvesting the next.**

**Special Thank You's:**

**Kayanni Commission, Sitka Tribe**

**Rita Blumenstein**

**Janice Schofield**

**Nancy Turner, 'Keeping it Living'**

**Trevor Lantz, "The population Ecology and Ethnobotany of Devil's Club (Oplopanax horridus)"**

**Su Alexander**

**Friends, children, dogs, plants,**

**Creator**

**Traditional knowledge of specific practices and cultural protocols relating to harvest of Devil's Club help in the development of strategies to sustainably manage Devil's Club where ever you are.**

## Cultural harvesting practices

**Don't disturb the root. If there is lots of it, can thin it out.**

**Secondary stalks for routine medicinal use**

**Don't harvest the main stalk**

**Proper protocols: ask permission from plant; thank, and honor it afterwards.**

**Flowering and fruiting stems not harvested**

**Selective removal of individual aerial stems and decumbent stems. (protect older and more vigorous stems)**

**Transplant sections of the stem in the mud.**

**Broken pieces often root naturally**

**What about harvest of buds for food?**

**I harvest only one bud for every small clump.**

**20% is maximum for population.**

## Inner bark of stems:  tea

**Devil's Club is sacred and spiritual to many peoples.**
**Before harvesting, ask permission from managers of the land.**

**For responsible harvesting of Devil's Club,**

**No harvest of mother roots.**

**No more than 20% of the stems of any one colony should be removed, and only the ones from the outside of the colony.**

**Let the colony rest for at least two years before reharvesting.**

**Do not harvest on stream or river banks.**

**Respect the plant. Say please and thank you.**

**Replant portions of the stems in the ground (horizontally).**

**Do not take more than one bud from any stem. Collect buds from many colonies, rather than from just one.**

**Think about nature and what Devil's Club is providing for the environment first!**

**Devil's Club growing on banks of streams provides shade for salmon and their eggs.**

**Grizzly and black bear eat seeds, leaves and stems. Elk and deer browse on it, as does one of my dogs.**

**It provides hiding, escape, and thermal cover for birds and rodents.**

**For the plant community, Devil's Club provides structure, nutrient cycling, soil stabilization.**

**Can we apply this knowledge of one plant to other native plants?**

**Sharing**
**Respect**
**Listening**
**Elders**
**Teachers**


CHARTER
CHOOL

# Ethnobotany Teaching Gardens

**Respect.  No waste. You can harvest stems in the winter.**

**Stem harvesting is less damaging to Devil's Club population.**

**Make friends with Devil's Club as I have, respect it, say please and thank you, understand how important it is for all of us, and you will be blessed by your relationship.**