

Culturally Important Plants of the Lakota (excerpt)

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1. *Achillea millefolium*, Western yarrow, ȥháópi p̥hěžúta (tah-oh-pee pay-zhoo-tah)

Poultice of dried leaves and flowers used to heal spider and other insect bites. Wad of moistened leaves put in outer ear to cure earache. You can also make a garlic/yarrow oil for earaches and ear infections. Poultice made from whole plant applied to wounds to stop bleeding. Leaves chewed for toothache. Leaves rubbed on irritated skin to relieve itching. An infusion made from leaves used to treat stomach pains, coughing, and sore throat. An infusion is also used to stimulate sweating and urination, as a mild laxative, to cleanse/detoxify the blood, and to treat internal bleeding.

2. *Acorus calamus*, sweet flag/bitterroot, siŋkpé ȥhāwóte (sink-peh ta-wo-tay)

A decoction of the roots is taken for fever, sore throats, coughs, stomach problems, heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes. Root chewed for sore throat and toothache. Poultice of crushed root used externally for muscle cramps. Root is chewed and then put onto one's face to ward off fear in the presence of an enemy. Pulverized root mixed with mustard and made into a decoction, which is effective against arm and leg cramps. Piece of root placed inside of cheek to ward off bad spirits.

3. *Agastache foeniculum*, lavender hyssop, waḥpé yaȥhápi (wah-pay yah-tah-pee)

Leaves used to make a pleasant tea. Leaves chewed for their "licorice" flavor and to freshen breath. They may also be added to cooked meats and fruits. An infusion of the leaves is used to treat colds and fevers, and to strengthen the heart.

4. *Arctium minus*, burdock, waḥpé ȥhánka (wah-pay tahn-kah)

The young, green shoots are eaten raw or cooked, as are the tender roots. It sometimes takes a lot of boiling to remove the bitter taste from the roots. A decoction of the roots is an excellent blood tonic (detoxifier) and also makes an excellent salve or poultice that is effective against boils, rashes, eczema, acne, boils, and insect bites. It is used in the treatment of colds with sore throat and cough.

5. *Artemisia absinthium*, absinth wormwood, p̥hěží ḥóta šičámna (peh-zhee hoe-tah shee-cha-m'nah)

A decoction of the whole plant is used to treat heart disease and diabetes; however, care must be taken, as large quantities of this infusion may be toxic. It has been known to stimulate the liver, gall bladder and digestive system. A tea or capsule of the leaf is used to treat stomach parasites such as giardia. The plant is also used externally to treat insect bites and stings.

6. *Artemisia frigida*, fringed sagewort, p̥hěží ḥóta waštémina (peh-zhee hoe-tah wash-teh-m'nah)

This sage is known as "women's medicine." Women use it to treat menopausal symptoms by infusing their bath water or making a bitter infusion. An infusion also helps to regulate menstruation and might cause uterine contractions.

7. *Artemisia ludoviciana*, ceremonial sage, p̄žeží hóta wápe blaskáska (peh-zhee hoe-tah ah-pay blah-skah)

Leaves and stems burned as incense and "smudging." That is, the sage is burned and the smoke breathed in, and wafted all over the body to purify one's self. An infusion of the plant is used to treat stomach disorders, to treat intestinal worms, to calm nerves, and to treat colds, sore throats and diarrhea. This sage is important in all ceremonies, as it purifies surroundings and drives away bad, negative, or disruptive spirits. The smoke of this sage has also been shown to be incredibly antimicrobial.

8. *Ceanothus herbaceous*, New Jersey tea, uṅp̄hánj ṭh̄awóte (oo-pha ta-wo-tay)

Leaves are used to make a fragrant tea. An infusion is used to treat asthma, chronic bronchitis, whooping cough, consumption, and dysentery, fevers and sore throat.

9. *Cleome serrulata*, Rocky Mountain bee plant, waṅpé ṅ'eṅ'é (wah-phe h'eh-h'eh)

This plant is used in combination with *Amorpha canescens* to ensnare bison into a trap. Young shoots, leaves and flowers may be eaten as a potherb. An infusion of the plant is drunk to treat fevers to relieve stomach disorders. A poultice made from the macerated, moistened leaves is used to relieve sore eyes.

10. *Cornus sericea*, red osier dogwood, red willow, čaṅšáša (cha-sha-sha)

During very cold months, the Lakota collect the stems of this shrub and then peel off the bright red, outer bark. What is desired is the cambium layer just below the red, outer bark. This material will be a light green to white color when freshly peeled, later turning a reddish brown. Čaṅšáša is used in ceremonial pipe smoking, and is considered a very sacred plant. The red bark is astringent and tonic and is used to treat diarrhea, fevers, and eczema. A decoction of the bark is used as a wash for sore eyes, styes, and to treat poison ivy rash and boils.

11. *Crataegus succulenta*, hawthorn, mathó ṭh̄aspánj

The flowers and berries are excellent for treating heart related illnesses, muscular issues, and multiple sclerosis. A decoction or even a tincture of the fruits and flowers is excellent for strengthening the heart and for treating high blood pressure.

12. *Echinacea angustifolia*, Echinacea, purple coneflower, ičháhpe hú (ee-chah-pay hoo)

A poultice of the root is applied to wounds, swellings, and sores. The roots and seed heads are chewed to relieve toothache, sore throat, tonsillitis, and stomach-ache. The chewed root and its juices are applied to venomous bites (including snakes, spiders, and bees), and are also applied to burns. The smoke from the burning root is inhaled to treat headaches in people and distemper in horses. A tincture, or decoctions made from the root is used to boost the immune system and relieve flu and cold symptoms.

13. *Eupatorium maculatum*, Joe pyeweed, waṅčá p̄h̄ep̄h̄éla (wah-cha pay-pay-la)

An infusion of the whole plant is diuretic and is used to treat kidney ailments, painful urination, and rheumatism. A decoction of the roots lowers fevers, treats colds, and kidney infections.

14. *Glycyrrhiza lepidota*, American licorice, wild licorice, wináwizi čík'ala (wee-nah-wee-zee chee-kah-lah)

The root is chewed to treat toothache and the flu. A decoction of the dried root or leaves is used to treat diarrhea, upset stomach, fever, coughs, chest pain, and sore throat. A decoction is also used to treat allergy symptoms. The root is also used to protect pregnant women from spiritual harm.

15. *Grindelia squarrosa*, curlycup gumweed, pté íčh'iyuŋ (p'tay-eech-ee-yoo)

An infusion of the tops of the plants is used to treat asthma and/or to relieve bronchial symptoms. This plant, however, should not be used by people with heart or kidney disorders. The decoction, taken three times a day, will relieve constricted airways and even help to dry phlegm.

16. *Humulus lupulus*, hops, wínakapo

The papery fruits of the hops vine are steeped and the resulting infusion drunk to treat fever and intestinal pains. Hops are also boiled and the resulting liquid mixed with various flour sources (ground nuts, ground roots, pollens) to make bread. Hops encourages CO2 production and therefore makes bread rise. The resulting dough is used to make bread. Hops contain a natural sedative and an infusion, although bitter, is excellent for treating sleeplessness (insomnia), stress, and anxiety.

17. *Hydrastis canadensis*, goldenseal, pǎóge očáŋčañ pǎžútan (po-gay oh-chan-chan pay-zhoo-tah)

An infusion of the root treats digestive disorders and soothes mucous membranes. It is also extremely useful in treating of constipation. An infusion also treats earache, sore throat, and runny nose. An infusion can be used to flush congested sinuses. Goldenseal is antibacterial and long-term use may destroy beneficial intestinal organisms, so use for limited periods of time. An infusion of the root is used externally as a wash for skin diseases, vaginal infections, and gum disease.

18. *Juniperus virginiana*, cedar, ĥanté šá (han-tay sha)

Juniper leaves are burned ceremonially, especially to cure the fear of thunder. A decoction is made from the cones and leaves is used to treat coughs. The cones have an incredibly strong "pine" flavor, but are effective in relieving thirst. Smoke from burning twigs is inhaled to relieve head congestion. Red Cloud had a vision that he should drink a decoction of the leaves or bathe in the decoction to treat cholera. It was said that this cure was infallible.

19. *Leonurus cardiaca*, motherwort, čheyáka okhížata (chay-ah-kah oh-kee-zha-tah)

The leaves are made into an infusion, which is used to treat heart palpitations and nervous conditions.

20. *Ligusticum porteri*, osha root, bear root, mathó thǎphéžuta (mah-toe tah-pay-zhoo-tah)

A decoction of the roots or seeds is used to treat poor circulation, fevers, bronchitis, and cramps. The root is used in ceremonial pipe-smoking. The root is burned and the smoke inhaled through the nose to relieve headache and to eliminate sinus infections.

21. *Mahonia aquifolium*, Oregon grape root, húte zí (hoo-teh zee)

Oregon grape is used to treat stomach disorders and weak digestive systems. It will also stimulate kidney and gallbladder function and to reduce phlegm in the nose and lungs. An infusion of the whole plant is used to treat psoriasis and respiratory infections. The compound berberine, which is present in the roots of Oregon grape, is very antibacterial and is used to treat all kinds of infections, especially of the lungs.

22. *Mentha arvensis*, field mint, čheyáka (chay-ah-kah)

The leaves and stems are boiled to make tea, which is commonly served at ceremonies, feeds, and various meetings. The leaves may also be eaten fresh or dried to treat indigestion. A strong decoction made from the roots is used to treat headaches and fever.

23. *Monarda fistulosa*, wild bergamot, beebalm, horsemint, heháka thap'héžuta (hay-ha-kah tah-pay-zhoo-tah)

An infusion of the flowers or leaves is used to treat abdominal pains, indigestion, fevers, sore throats, colds, whooping cough, and fainting. A poultice of the leaves is used to treat snakebites, to stop bleeding, to relieve sore eyes, and to prevent wounds from getting infected. The leaves are chewed while singing, dancing or hunting to prevent sore throat. A decoction of the whole plant is used to bathe diabetic ulcers - this will kill the infection and promote healing.

24. *Oenothera biennis*, evening primrose, čaŋh'lógaŋ húh'la (cha-hlo-gah hoo-hla)

A poultice of the whole plant is applied to bruises. The leaves are used to treat asthma and cough. Evening primrose oil is used to treat acne, fibrocystic breast tissue, rheumatoid arthritis, cirrhosis, and high cholesterol.

25. *Plantago major*, common plantain, wahpe tanka (wah-peh tahn-kah)

The leaves are made into a poultice that is extremely effective in the treatment of burns and scalds. It is also applied to bruises, sprains, sores, insect bites, bee stings, snakebites, and splinters. The poultice will quickly stop bleeding on open wounds.

26. *Populus deltoides*, cottonwood, wágačhaŋ (wah-gah-cha)

The bark is chewed to treat toothache, or made into a decoction that is drunk to treat headaches, menstrual cramps, and fevers. The sticky buds are used to make an excellent salve for irritated skin.

27. *Prunus americana*, wild plum, k'hán'ta (kahn-tah)

A strong decoction of the twigs is used to treat asthma. A poultice of the inner bark will prevent infection and is used to treat open wounds. The fruits of all *Prunus* species are added to dried meat and mixed together with fat to make *wasna* (also known as pemmican).

28. *Ratibida columnifera*, yellow coneflower, asáŋpi iyátke, (ah-sam-pee ee-yat-kay)

An infusion of the flowers is used to treat chest pain and kidney ailments. A poultice of the flowers is used to treat wounds. An infusion of the entire inflorescence is used to treat headaches and stomachaches. A decoction of the whole plant is used as a wash for snakebites. The whole plant is fed to horses to treat urinary tract infections.

29. *Rhus trilobata*, aromatic sumac, čhán ŋkčémna (cha oonk-che-m'na)

The leaves are mixed with various tobaccos for pipesmoking. A decoction of the leaves is antifungal and is used to treat thrush, yeast infections, and athlete's foot.

30. *Rosa woodsii*, wild rose, prairie rose, ŋžínžintka hú (oo-zhee-zhee-t'kah hoo)

An infusion of the flowers or hips is used to treat bladder infections and kidney stones. The hips are added to facewashes to treat acne. The petals and hips are extremely high in Vitamin C, and they also contain essential fatty acids, which is unusual for a fruit.

31. *Rubus occidentalis*, wild raspberry, thák'hánhečala hú (tah-ka-heh-cha-la hoo)

An infusion of the leaves is used to treat diarrhea in children. An infusion of the roots is used to treat sore eyes. A decoction of the leaves is used to treat infected sores.

32. *Salix exigua*, willow, čhóhán wanžiča (choe-han wa-zhee-cha)

The Lakota also make a decoction of the bark which is used to treat headaches and fever. The peeled bark is also used as a poultice for wounds and cuts.

33. *Sambucus nigra*, elderberry, čan phuté hú (cha-poo-teh hoo)

The ripe berries are boiled with honey or maple sap and the resulting syrup is used to treat cough and cold or any other viral illness.

34. *Silphium laciniatum*, compass plant, čhanšínšinja (cha-shee-shee-la)

Children sometimes use the resin as chewing gum. An infusion of the whole plant is used to rid horses and humans of intestinal worms. An infusion of the leaves is used to loosen phlegm in the lungs.

35. *Solidago missouriensis*, prairie goldenrod, čhanúnŋa hú pteptéčela (can-noo-gah hoo p'tay-p'tay-che-la)

An infusion of the dried leaves, flowers, and stems treats stomachaches, gastroenteritis, and influenza. It is also used to treat urinary tract infections, yeast infections, and sore throats. A decoction of the entire plant is used to expel kidney stones.

36. *Taraxacum officinale*, dandelion, waččá zí (wah-cha zee)

A decoction of the root is drunk as a tonic and a liver stimulant. All parts of the plant are very diuretic. The leaves may be added to salad, and they are often used to help regulate blood sugar. Dandelions are also high in the antioxidant luteolin, which is said to be effective in preventing certain types of cancer. The plant has antibacterial properties, inhibiting the growth of *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Pneumococci*, *Meningococci*, *Bacillus dysenteriae*, and others.

37. *Thuja plicata*, flat cedar, hanté (han-tay)

The pitch or sap from this tree is antibacterial and is used in making salves. A decoction of the leaves is used to treat colds and flu symptoms. A decoction of the leaves and stems is used to treat coughs, colds, and tuberculosis and is also effective in treating dandruff.

38. *Urtica dioica*, stinging nettles, čaŋjčahpehu (can-ee-cha-h'pay hoo)

An infusion is used to treat arthritis, rheumatism, allergies, and eczema. The whole plant is used to make a salve that is excellent in treating sciatica, eczema, and dandruff. The young leaves are made into a decoction that is taken internally to treat hives. The whole plant is used to "whip" arthritic joints as a counter-irritant. An infusion of the whole plant is used as a hair wash to increase hair growth.

39. *Verbena hastata*, blue vervain, čaŋhłogaŋ phezúta (cha-hlo-ga pay-zhoo-tah)

An infusion of the roots and leaves is used to treat stomachache, fevers, and kidney stones. An infusion is also used to treat anxiety and depression, especially for youth. This is a warming herb that promotes good circulation.

40. *Yucca glauca*, yucca, soapweed, huphestola (hoo-pes-toe-la)

The root is dried and powdered - the powder is then boiled for long periods to make an excellent shampoo. A decoction of the root is used to treat stomachaches. The roots of this plant and the roots of *Opuntia polyacantha* are made into an infusion that is used to contract the uterus.