

Foraging Code of Conduct

from the website of Urban Edibles, a discontinued urban foraging project started in Portland, Oregon

Ethical Considerations

This project cannot exist unless every participant acts responsibly. Be mindful of the sources you pick from and submit to the database. Here is a short working list of considerations.

Asking Permission

Always ask permission before you pick no matter where the trees or bushes are located. Not everyone is alright with their neighbors picking from their sidewalk plot. However, many fruit-producing trees and herbaceous species are readily available on public land. It's not always easy to tell which is which. Part of being a thoughtful community member is in respecting both private and public terrain. The Urban Edibles wild food source database is designed as a resource for potential harvesting locations (i.e. areas with an abundance of fallen fruit). We do not condone unsanctioned harvesting practices or trespassing. Consistently asking permission to harvest wild foods ensures lawful conduct. It also promotes face-to-face dialog between you and your neighbors. We believe that building this kind of wild food network helps connect us to one another as well as our urban habitat. It makes our communities that much healthier!

How much do I really need?

A tree full of ripe black cherries can be really exciting but how many will you use before they go bad? How much can you carry? Decide before you pick. Over-harvesting a wild food source can be very counterintuitive when the goods go bad.

Will my harvesting leave an impact?

This includes visual impact, impact for future harvesters and last but not least the impact on the particular plant you are picking from. It is imperative to pick in a balanced and selective manner. The last thing we want is to damage the sources from which we harvest! You can help a public source produce better next year by watering it or notifying the city if it needs pruning.

Health Considerations

Watch out! It's easy to forget that Portland is a major metropolitan area with a strong potential for toxicity. Engaging dialog with homeowners and park workers about the history of a site is always helpful. Paint chips, pesticides, motor oil spills and even car wash runoff can affect the quality of the sources you pick from. The Portland Parks website claims that "the vast majority of pest management practices in parks never involve the use of pesticides" (Source). However, this is not always so. A vast majority of homeowners also tend to implement domestic pesticides like Roundup as well. Needless to say, it's always best to glean as much information from the harvesting site as you can.

Lawful Considerations

Legalities related to harvesting wild food sources are not always clear. However, the City of Portland has several laws and regulations pertaining to urban forestry practices such as Chapter 20.40 of the Portland City Code and Charter.