**Know your plant or fungi.**  Consider learning the botany, anatomy, lifecycle, habitat, ecology of each plant or fungi you intend to use. Use scientific names in addition to common names when discussing plants, common names are often ambiguous and common names can often refer to multiple species, some which may be used differently. Use your senses smartly and safely. It helps to know the associated native lore and respect the traditions of others as they are often steeped in stewardship.

**Don’t over-harvest**. Avoid the get ‘em all mentality. Someone or something always comes up short in the long or short run. Consider the other users of the ecosystem, fellow foragers, animals, insects … etc. Only harvest as much material as you need - never more. Plan your outings and start with a recipe so you know exactly how much of the plant material you need. Be cautious when foraging on a whim because these scenarios (while rather exciting for us) can often be detrimental for the environment because we’re more likely to over-harvest. If your recipe calls for more than what is available on a certain plant then harvest from multiple plants or locations to acquire the amount you need. Or, don’t harvest.

**Don’t improperly harvest so as to kill the parent organism.**  Consider the lifecycle of the parent plant and never remove all of the roots, all of the seeds, all the flower heads, or so much of the plant that it can’t continue to grow and reproduce. There are some exceptions to this rule such as harvesting invasive species or for plants that grow so abundantly and involve root processing to extract the medicinal benefits. I recommend learning how and when to forage roots with an expert, or cultivating the plant in a home garden to harvest the benefits.

**Never harvest any protected, endangered or at-risk species.**  Most local land management agencies have a list of protected, endangered, or at-risk plants and/or fungi to avoid.

**Minimize your trace.**  Any excursion outdoors should involve careful consideration of your impact on the land. If you took it in you should take it back out. Avoid excessive disturbance which can damage roots and or fungi in soil.

**Harvest in the right season for the plant to avoid harming the ecosystem.**  Cutting or removing parts of plants when they are dormant in the winter can cause significant die-back or harm. Likewise, foraging during the intense heat of summer, especially during a drought, when plants are already stressed is likely to cause undue harm. Winter is the root-harvesting season for most plants because that’s where the plant's sugars are at that time. Spring is a great time to harvest rosettes of foliage, buds, barks and some roots. Summer is a good time to harvest foliage, flowers, resin, and berries. Fall is ideal to harvest berries, seeds, nuts, and some roots.

**Observe the health of the plant or fungi before harvesting**. If a plant or fungi looks wilted, discolored, overrun by pests, or generally looks sad, it’s likely suffering. Avoid harvesting plants or fungi that are not robust and healthy. Many plants that grow right next to trails and footpaths endure more stress than those located off trail. When foraging, it’s best to forage plants that are off the main trail if the wilderness area permits that. Just be sure to tread lightly so as not to damage any surrounding plants. Consider that areas around trails and roads may be sprayed, some plants and fungi may look fine, others may look sick; it is best to ask the managing authority.

**Consider your location**. Was this an old railroad grade? Is this a mining area or is there oil smells in the ground? Is this area treated with chemicals? Does the plant or fungi I am considering collecting in this area collect heavy metals such as lead or cadmium?

**Always ask permission from the land owner, or get a permit if necessary in writing**. Many wilderness areas in the United States, State parks, federal parks and county lands prohibit foraging for commercial or personal uses except when permits are obtained or there are published rules. It’s important to research land boundaries, ask permission and obtain a permit before removing any plant or fungal material from an area.