

DELAWARE ETHNOBOTANY

by
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re-edited in 2015

by
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and
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Introduction To The Second Edition-

This article was originally published in 1971. It was written as part of a research project by George Hill while attending Oklahoma State University. The idea was to gather plant usage information from Delaware tribal members, and then after assembling the information, to return to gather additional information and more plant specimens. He also planned to add photographs and additional Delaware or Lenape names of the plants. Unfortunately, the second trip to visit with tribal elders did not happen because there was some pressure to get the article finished and into print. As a result, in the original article many plants were not listed by their Lenape names, and in a few cases, based on the common English names of the plants, they were assigned improper botanical names.

In this second edition which is being prepared to add to the website of the Delaware Tribe of Indians we have attempted to correct the errors, and to add more of the Lenape names for the plants. As with anything written about medicinal use of plants we strongly recommend consulting with someone familiar with the plants, such as a botanist or horticulturalist, about their usage before the reader attempts to self-medicate.

We hope that you will find this long out-of-print article about Lenape plant usage both interesting and beneficial.

Original Introduction:

Ethnobotany is the study of the relationship of plants to people. The plant uses of living people are studied and the effect of plants on economy, religion, and everyday life are explored. In this monograph I have attempted to present material concerning the use of plants by one group of American Indians, the group known as the Delaware Tribe.

In the early historic period the Delawares were a loosely knit confederacy of Algonquian speaking people occupying the basin of the Delaware River in the present states of New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. Their present name, Delaware, derives from the name of the river, which was named for an English lord.

The groups which became known as the Delaware Tribe call themselves Lenape in their own language meaning "Real" or "Original" people. In the early historic period the Delawaran groups did not constitute an organized tribe, but rather a number of autonomous villages united by a common language (in two main dialects) and a common culture. Gradually forced from their original habitat by Whites, most of the Delaware moved west, and in the process developed a sense of tribal identification. Early on, some of them first removed to the Susquehanna, settling at Wyoming and other points about 1742. In 1751, by invitation of the Huron, they began to form settlements in eastern Ohio. Though they valiantly resisted the encroachments of the Whites, they were again pushed west, first to Indiana in 1770, then to Missouri in 1789. By 1835 most of the tribe had been gathered onto a reservation in Kansas. From the Kansas reservation this group again removed, in 1867, to the Indian Territory and were incorporated with the Cherokee Nation. Some Delaware, largely Munsee speakers, moved to Canada before the American Revolution.

Today a number of groups of people of Delaware or part-Delaware origin remain. In Ontario are three groups: all of the Munsee dialect group; the "Moravians of the Thames" near Bothwell, Ontario, numbering about 400; the "Munsee of the Thames," near Munceytown, Ontario, about 185; and the "Grand River Delaware," on the Grand River Reserve, near Hagersville, Ontario, about 150. In Wisconsin are the Stockbridge-Munsee, perhaps 300 in number. The largest group is the Caney River Delaware, who live in and near Dewey, Oklahoma. They number about 1,000. Also in Oklahoma are the Anadarko Delawares, (now they renamed themselves the Delaware Nation). They live in and near Anadarko, Oklahoma and number about 100. Closely related to the Delaware are the Nanticoke and Mahican. The latter group is represented in the "Stockbridge" element of the Stockbridge-Munsee in Wisconsin and in a small community in New York State. A mixed group of Nanticoke live in Indian River Hundred and Cheswold in the state of Delaware while others are incorporated among the Iroquois, whom they joined in 1753, and among the Caney River Delaware.

The work reported in the following pages was done entirely among the Caney River Delaware in Oklahoma, the largest and also the most conservative of the surviving Delaware groups. This work was accomplished during the summer of 1969. Even in this group White acculturation has proceeded at a rapid rate, and I was able to find only a few knowledgeable informants, all of them past middle age. It is obvious that if the old traditions are not recorded within the next few years they will be lost forever.

My two principal Delaware informants were both considered by other Delaware in the area to be well-versed in native plant lore. I received the majority of my information from Nora Thompson Dean of Dewey, Oklahoma. Mrs. Dean is a full-blood Delaware. She supplied information on both tribal plant medicines and tribal plant lore.



George Hill and Nora Dean discuss plants during his research

Freddie Washington of Wann, Oklahoma, was my second major informant. Fred supplied information on plants used for crafts, plus a smaller amount of other information.



Other Delaware informants were Mrs. C. O. Davis of Dewey



and the late Reuben Wilson of Copan.



Reuben Wilson in a parade in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, in 1939

My research was financed by a small grant from the Oklahoma State University Research Foundation, and conducted under the direction of Dr. James H. Howard, Associate Professor of Anthropology in the Department of Sociology at Oklahoma State. In addition to the above my thanks go to Mr. James Rementer, who transcribed and helped translate the Delaware plant names. Jim is studying the Delaware language and resides with the Dean family in Dewey.

Introduction

Plants and plant materials played an important part in the everyday life of the Delaware. Foods for the table, baskets for general use, toys for children, and of course medicines, all prepared from either wild or domesticated plants, were used in every Delaware home. The religion of the Delaware, likewise, made important use of plant materials.

Almost every Delaware had some knowledge of the use of plants for healing. Medicinal teas and salves were a part of the knowledge of every household. Common herb medicines not requiring an accompanying incantation could be prepared by anyone. Today, the Delaware still make use of plants in their religious ceremonies. In the ceremonies of the Native American Church or Peyote religion many wild plants are still used for religious purposes in addition to the peyote cactus.

A great number of the herb simples employed by the Delaware have a known therapeutic value. More than 50% of the plants I gathered contain ingredients which are a recognized part of the modern pharmacopeias.

Practitioners

Delaware "herb doctors" or practitioners were individuals trained to use plants in the art of healing. An early writer on the tribe, John Heckewelder, notes a division still recognized by my informants in 1969, "one who knows (medicine) well" and "one who uses medicine for magic purposes." (1876: 231) A person who is a combination of these two classes also exists.

Nora Dean states that practitioners are usually women but that male herbalists were not unknown, and was able to recall two men among the recent Delaware who were herbalists. This apparently represents a changing situation, as she commented "Once they were all men and only one woman in the tribe used her power to cure people."

Gifted practitioners usually had to have the sanction of a vision before they undertook the curing profession. This vision was usually in the form of a dream or dream-like occurrence. Practical knowledge of actual uses of the various plants, however, was learned from old people of the tribe. Thus, Nora Dean commented that she was taught by her mother and also by another old lady in the tribe. She further remarked, "The old lady who taught me was in her nineties and was about to die. She was very old and wanted some younger person to go along with her. I also learned

plant uses from my mother. She took me along with her in the last days of her life and showed me what to take and how to dig them."

Plant materials were also employed in witchcraft which loomed ominously in the life of the Delaware until quite recently. In the Delaware belief herb medicines were neutral in quality and therefore could be employed for either good or evil purposes depending upon the will of the practitioner. Thus a person with the requisite power and training could use them to either heal or cause injuries, or to work white or black magic, unite or separate lovers, and so on.

Gathering Herb Medicines

When a Delaware gathered a plant for a sick person, he or she always asked the Creator to give his blessing to that plant. Tantaquidgeon gives an excellent account of the rites employed in gathering medicine:

If a practitioner is called upon to treat a person during the growing season in spring or summer, his first move, after the formal acceptance of the case and receipt of a gift of tobacco, is to go out and seek a plant of the desired species to be used in making medicine for the treatment of the particular ailment. After coming upon the first plant (p. 9) of the variety, he does not gather it but performs a ritual to appease the spirit of the plant. A small hole is dug towards the east near its base and a small quantity of native tobacco placed within. The herbalist then lights his pipe and smokes, meanwhile making an appeal to the Creator and to the Spiritual forces which govern vegetation . . . Upon the conclusion of this propitiatory rite the medicine person searches out another plant of the same species, which if clean and healthy-looking, is then gathered." (Tantaquidgeon 1942)



Gladys Tantaquidgeon examines a beaded belt worn by Nora Dean when they met in Connecticut in 1980

Nora Dean, who was quite familiar with the above procedure, added that the plant is handled according to the location of the pain in the patient's body. For example, if the patient is experiencing pains in the abdomen, one does not shake the root too hard but instead shakes off the dirt as gently as possible. In other words a sympathetic relationship is recognized between the handling of the herb and the handling of the patient.

Some medicines are gathered during the growing season and then stored for winter use. They are cleaned and allowed to dry thoroughly, then placed in a dust proof container. Mrs. Dean cautioned against gathering too much and thus wasting medicine, a custom which James Howard reports for the Ponca, Kickapoo, and other tribes as well (personal communication, 1971). The rationale seems to be that the "plant Spirits" will be offended by such wasteful destruction of their kind.

The Use of Herb Medicines in the Sweat Lodge Ceremony

The Sweating ceremony was used by the Delaware for both spiritual and physical purification. Fred Washington, my chief informant on this subject, said that it had been several years since the Caney River Delaware had used sweat lodges, but that formerly their use was general. The lodges were of various sizes, round in floor plan, dome-shaped, and, in his day, covered with canvas, a substitute for hides or other covering in earlier times. Limestone rocks were used in the lodge. The rocks were heated red hot and then water that contained herb medicines was sprinkled on them to raise steam. The patients sat inside and sweat the poison out of their systems. Songs were used in the Sweating ceremony but these have now been forgotten.

Plants Used by the Delaware

In listing the plants used by the Delaware I have divided them according to function: Medicinal Plants (internal and external), Food Plants, Ceremonial Agents, and Miscellaneous Domestic uses. I have listed the common name of the plant first, then its botanical name, and then its Delaware name and its translation if such is available. The following initials are used to credit information provided by particular informants: NTD, Nora Thompson Dean; FW, Fred Washington; RW, Reuben Wilson; AD, Mrs. C. O. Davis. A phonetic key for use in rendering the Delaware terms, supplied by James Rementer, will be found at the end of the paper.

To hear many of these plant names pronounced go to the Lenape Language website at www.talk-lenape.org.

MEDICINES

External Treatments

1. HORSEMINT, INDIAN PERFUME (commonly known as bee balm), (*Monarda sp.*), Winkimakwsko - "sweet smelling grass"

The leaves are used as a headache cure. The leaves are crushed and placed in a small pan of cold water. The wet leaves are then placed in a rag and applied on the head as a compress. NTD.

NOTE: There were two kinds used, but not Mentha. It should be Monarda. See also #53



2. BLACK WALNUT (*Juglans nigra*), Tùkwim, "Round Nut."

Black walnut leaves are employed in curing ringworm. The leaves are boiled to make a "tea" which is then used to wash the ringworm. NTD

3. BLACK THORNY LOCUST (*Gleditsia tricanthus*), Pitèlais, "double thorn."

The bark is used to treat colds by inducing perspiration. The bark is gathered on the east side of the tree. The bark is then boiled to make a "tea" and this is imbibed either warm or cold. The patient must stay in bed after drinking the liquid. NTD

4. JIMSON WEED (*Datura*), Lehèlòkwèntaèèk, "evening blooming flower."

Jimson weed is used in treating burns. The leaves on the top of the plant are first wilted on a hot stove and then applied to the burn. The pain will disappear after the wilted leaves are applied. NTD

5. PRICKLY PEAR (*Opuntia humifosa*), Mahtaksèn. (no literal translation)

The leaf is used for boils or carbuncles (overgrown brown boils). The leaf is shredded and placed on a piece of cloth which is then tied over the boil as a compress. NTD



6. WILD STRAWBERRY (*Fragaria virginiana*), Wtehim, "heart fruit."

The fruit of this plant are used to improve the complexion. The fruit should be crushed and then applied as a face mask. NTD,

7. IRONWEED (*Vernonia* sp.), Hatusakàn

The leaves of this plant are used to improve the complexion. The leaves are applied as a face mask. NTD [Note: This was originally misidentified botanically as Joe-Pye-Weed (*Eupatorium purpureum*)]

8. COTTONWOOD (*Populus deltoides*), Këkchëkwipahkihëlas, "moving leaves"

A "tea" prepared from the bark of the tree is used for a liniment. A large handful of bark is boiled to make the "tea." It is a good medicine to rub on a person's arms, hands, legs, and joints. The liniment is applied especially to an area which gives pain. FW.

9. PERSIMMON (*Diospyros virginiana*), Ximënshi, "Persimmon tree."

A few drops of the sap are placed in the ear to stop earache. A persimmon wood stick is placed in the fire until the sap begins to "sweat" and this is then collected. NTD

Internal Medicines

10. SOUTHERN RED OAK (*Quercus falcata*), Wisahkakw, "bitter tree."

A decoction made from chips of the wood of this tree is used as an astringent for bowel trouble, and for sore throats. The wood chips are boiled in water to form a "tea." NTD, FW

11. SLIPPERY ELM (*Ulmus fulva*) , Xkwikpi, "slippery elm bark."

A drink is made by soaking strips of the bark in water. This drink is used to relieve chills

12. WILD BLACK CHERRY (*Prunus serotina*), Mwimënshi.

The bark is used for preparing a cough medicine. When gathering the bark for this purpose, strips are taken from different spots on the tree. The bark is then boiled in water and the "tea" produced is drunk while still hot. FW said that the tea is used to treat a stubborn cold, cough, or even pneumonia. NTD added that Wintergreen can be added to give the drink a more pleasant taste. In its usual form the "tea" is extremely bitter. NTD, FW

13. COMMON HOREHOUND (*Marrubium vulgare*), Delaware name not learned.

The plant was likely brought from Europe by Germans and Swiss settlers. Like the preceding, horehound is used as a cough syrup. Sugar is added to improve the taste. NTD

14. RED OAK (*Quercus* sp.), Wisahkakw, "bitter tree."

NTD stated that the Delaware use red oak for hoarseness and to keep the throat clear. To open the throat the inner bark was boiled in water to make a "tea." To clear throats, chips of red oak wood were placed in a bucket of water and the infusion drunk. This was used by singers, especially, to clear their throats. FW, who had often used "red oak water," attested to its value and noted that a bucket of this liquid was

customarily kept in the Delaware "Big House" or ceremonial lodge for use by the singers during the ceremonies.

15. BLACK OAK (*Quercus velutina*), Pahkamakw, "tree that one pounds."

Black oak is a good medicine for stopping hemorrhage, according to FW, but details concerning its application were not secured.

16. WATERMELON (*Citrullus vulgaris*), Eskitamink, "that which is eaten raw."

Watermelon seeds are used for kidney trouble. The seeds are boiled and the resulting liquid then imbibed. NTD

17. CORN SILK (*Zea mays*), Milxükòna, "that which is hair-like."

Corn silk is used for kidney trouble as well. A "tea," taken either hot or cold, is made from the corn silks. NTD

18. OATS (*Avena sativa*), Hots, (Delaware pronunciation of the English name).

Oats are used to cause measles to erupt and thus hasten the recovery of the patient. The oats are boiled to make a "tea." A few hours after taking this medicine the measles will erupt and this will shortly be followed by the reduction of fever. NTD

19. YARROW (*Achillea millefolium*), Anshikëmënshi.

Yarrow "tea" will stop excess menstrual flow. The roots of the plant are pounded with a stone, after which the macerated roots are boiled to produce the medicinal "tea." NTD

20. REDBUD (*Cercis canadensis*), Nènèskakw.

This, like the preceding, is used to stop excessive menstrual flow. The bark is gathered from "switches" or twigs. The bark is peeled upward and then tied in bundles which are boiled to produce a "tea." This liquid may be taken warm or cold. NTD



21. WILD GRAPE (*Vitis* sp.), Wisahkim, "bitter fruit."

RW said that wild grape juice is given to babies if the mother does not have milk.

22. BLACK WALNUT (*Juglans nigra*), Tùkwim, "round nut."

Black walnut is used for stomach cramps, to induce vomiting, and to cure ringworm. The branches are roasted over an open fire before one removes the bark. The bark is then boiled into a "tea." When taken internally it is for stomach cramps and to induce vomiting. It is applied externally for ringworm. FW also states that a "tea" made from the bark of young walnut switches are good for constipation. The bark is tied into bundles and boiled. NTD, FW

23. BLACK HAW (*Viburnum rufidulum*), Sakwënakanimënsi.

Small bands of black haw bark are boiled, strained, and the resulting liquid taken as a "tea" to cure stomach cramps. NTD

24. COMMON SUMAC (*Rhus glabra*), Këlëkënikwënakw "sumac shrub."

AD stated that the white part of the root is used for toothache or canker sores in the mouth. The outer brown part of the root is scraped off and the root chewed. NTD added that the sumac root was made into a "tea" that is gargled, and that it served to "tighten up the teeth" (cure pyorrhea).

25. ELDERBERRY (*Sambucus canadensis*), Puhwësënakw, "pithy tree."

The flowers of the elderberry, in the form of a "tea," are given to newborn babies as a tonic. NTD, RW

26. SASSAFRAS (*Sassafras albidum*), Winakw.

Some people say that sassafras tea will "thin the blood" (reduce high blood pressure). NTD

27. PEACH (*Prunus persica*), Pilkëshakw, ("pilk-" from German Pfirsich, peach, plus the Delaware ending "-akw," tree).

NTD's great aunt used peach leaves, together with mulberry leaves, to induce vomiting. NTD commented that she never used it herself.

28. BUTLER WILLOW (*Salix* sp.), Nushemakw, "Mother tree."

Butler willow is used to "tighten the teeth" (cure pyorrhea). If you get a tooth knocked loose it will tighten your gums in a hurry. A "tea" made from the bark of this tree will induce vomiting. NTD

29. SPURGE or CARPET SPURGE (*Chamaesyce humistrata*), Shipënàskikw, "spread-out grass."



Carpet spurge is used to cure warts. The white juice from a broken stem is applied to the wart. Application is repeated until the wart disappears. NTD

30. WILD INDIGO (*Baptisia tinctoria*), Ehamxink, "that which blows over."

FW stated that this plant was taken internally for stomach ache.

31. HONEY LOCUST (*Gleditsia triacanthos*), Kawënshuwik, 'thorny one.'

The bark can be made into a "tea" which is drunk hot to cure a cough. FW

[**NOTE:** A really bad mistake was made in case of the Locust tree as he worked from the common name and identified the tree as *Robina pseudoacacia*, which is poisonous, instead of what it really was, *Gleditsia triacanthos*. The error was in the local English name for the Honey Locust. George felt that that was the source of his misinformation, and he did not think he had done a field identification on this tree.]

32. BLACK HAW (*Viburnum prunifolium*), Sakwënakanim "black haw fruit."

NTD had heard that the **root** of the black haw was used to make a medicine used to cause an abortion.

FOODS

Roots, Bulbs, and Tubers

33. ONION (*Allium* sp.), Ulepën, "onion."

Two kinds of onions are used by the Delaware, seed and set. My informants cautioned against confusing the edible onions with poisonous varieties. They stated that the poison onion does not have "netting" around its head, while the edible ones do. NTD, FW, AD

34. WATER LILY (*Nymphaea* sp.), Mpiànàxkwim, "water acorn."

The root of this plant is eaten. The root is cut off at the joints and then boiled an entire day. It can then be cooked with meat. FW

35. INDIAN POTATO (*Helianthus tuberosa*), Hakialaipën, "in-ground tuber."

Sunchokes or Jerusalem Artichokes an underground tuber from the sunflower family is eaten. NTD, FW



Washing Hakialaipën in a small stream

35a. INDIAN POTATO *Apios Americana*, Tekëneipën, "woodlands tuber"

A small underground tuber sometimes called in English Hopniss. NTD



Potherbs and Greens

36. COMMON LAMBSQUARTER (*Chenopodium album*), Kanësa.

Young plants are gathered when they are six inches high. The lambsquarter greens are washed and then fried, with about two tablespoons of grease to add flavor. Poke greens and lambsquarter are also used for salads. NTD, FW

37. DANDELION (*Taraxarum officinale*), Delaware name not learned.

The leaves of the dandelions, when young, are used for greens.

38. MILKWEED (*Asclepias syriaca*), Pitukëna, "that which grows double."

Milkweed is gathered in the spring when about one foot tall. At this height it is still tender. FW explained that there are four kinds of milkweed, three of which are not fit to eat. The edible sort blooms in June.

Fungi

39. EDIBLE MOREL (*Morchella*), Ahkokwe, "mushroom."

The edible morel mushroom is gathered in early spring and eaten. This type of mushroom is often found around decaying red oak and hackberry logs. NTD, FW

40. OAK GALLS (a fungus appearing on Quercus species), Papaktis.

Oak galls are eaten by children. The outside shell is the edible portion. NTD

Fruits, Seeds, and Nuts

41. PAW-PAW (*Asimina triloba*), "Mahchikpiakw"

The fruits of the paw-paw are picked in the fall after a frost and eaten. NTD



Pawpaws in bloom



Pawpaw fruit

42. BLACK HAW (*Viburnum prunifolium*), Sakwënakanim, "black haw fruit."

When the nuts turn black in the fall they are harvested and eaten. NTD

43. WATER LILY (*Nymphaea* sp.), Mpiàndòxkwim, "water acorn."

The water lily produces pods containing a nut similar to acorns, which are baked and then eaten. The Delaware name refers to this similarity to acorns. NTD, FW

44. MAIZE (*Zea mays* sp.), Xàskwim, "corn."

Corn, in its various species, was undoubtedly the most important plant in Delaware culture. As such, it received recognition in the myths and legends of the people and was honored in important ceremonies. The Corn dance, formerly held in the spring of the year, honored the spirit of the corn. Likewise the Doll dance, sponsored each year by certain families which possessed one of the sacred dolls, was held to appease the spirit of the corn. The Doll dance embodies the idea of placating the latent ill will of the corn spirit, aroused through innocent familiarity incurred in the past by children of certain families and this sensitive manitou. In former times it was forbidden for persons, especially children, to play with cornhusks or other parts of the sacred grain. (Cf. Speck 1937: 61).

Several types of corn are recognized by the Delaware. These include:

WHITE FLOUR CORN, Puhwèm (some speakers say Puhèm.)

White corn is used for making corn bread. The Dean family grew this type of corn.



Grating the Puhwem to make Mèlinkweahpon (corn-in-the-milk bread)

BLUE CORN, Sèhsapsink, "that used to make sapan. "

The name of this type refers to sapan, a type of corn gruel with the consistency of porridge. The black-blue corn is for grinding, roasting, and cooking with meat.

WHITE SWEET CORN, Pisim, "wrinkled corn."

The sweet corn grown by some Delaware is the ordinary variety of garden corn.

POPCORN, Pèphòksink

Popcorn is grown by the Delaware. It is a traditional food.

Any other corn not used by the Delaware is called Shëwànàhkwiim, "White man corn." NTD

Beverages

45. SYCAMORE (*Platanus occidentalis*), Xaxakw, "tree."

The heartwood of the sycamore is used to make a drink prized by traditional Delaware. Chips of the heartwood are boiled in water to make a "tea." NTD commented "This drink is the next best thing to water." NTD

CEREMONIAL AGENTS

46. EASTERN RED CEDAR (*Juniperus virginiana*), Pèphòkwës

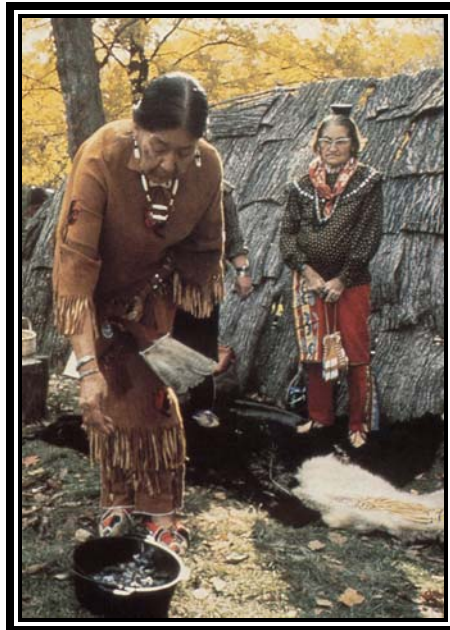
Eastern red cedar has been used since ancient times as purifying incense. NTD said that taking cedar to a pow-wow keeps the spirits of the departed away. An uncle told her to do this so she has done so all her life. She gathers cedar needles from a tree that several of the Delaware have used for many years as a source. The needles are dried and placed in a closed container.



Cedar Tree east of Dewey, Oklahoma, used by many tribal elders.

FW stated that cedar was used as incense in the Delaware Big house ceremonies, and that it is still used in the Native American church (Peyote religion). Like Mrs. Dean, Mr. Washington gathers and has on hand at all times a bag of cedar needles. Speck (1937: 120), notes that cedar was burned in the house after a death in the family. Also, cedar water is used to wash the widow's or widower's head.

Occasionally Mrs. Dean burns cedar for its purifying quality. After placing cedar needles on a fire, she offers a prayer in the Delaware language. She uses an eagle feather fan on these occasions to draw smoke to her head, hair, limbs, and body. Everyone present is then invited to cleanse himself with the smoke.



Mrs. Dean sprinkles cedar on hot coals as Lucy Blalock looks on. The event was to purify a newly dedicated educational center.



Don Wilson burns cedar and takes the cedar smoke throughout the Delaware Tribe's new Wellness Center in 2003.

47. WILD SAGE (*Salvia greggii*), Wipunkwskikw, "gray grass."

Sage is used for purification. Two kinds of sage are recognized by the Delaware, short and tall growing sage. The short kind is commonly used in the Peyote religion for purification. NTD, FW

48. PEYOTE (*Lophophora williamsii*), Mpisun, "medicine."



Peyote, a spineless cactus occurring in the Rio Grande Valley and further south in Mexico, is ingested by participants in the ceremonies of the Native American church or Peyote religion. The cactus, a complex alkaloid, is venerated by members of the Peyote religion among the Delaware but violently denounced by tribesmen who are non-members. Peyote members generally ingest the plant in one of three ways: a. "green," in which the fresh, green, above-ground part of the plant is eaten raw; b. "dried" in which the above-ground portion of the plant, dried in the sun or over a stove is ingested in the form of "buttons;" and "tea" in which dried "buttons" are boiled in water. This last is the form offered to persons who are ill, though also taken by others during the all night ceremony. Peyote was introduced among the Caney River Delaware in 1885 by John Wilson, a man of part Washita River Delaware descent. For details of the Peyote religion as practiced by the Delaware, see Petrullo (1934) and La Barre (1938).

Occasionally peyotists may eat peyote or brew peyote "tea" outside of the actual religious ceremony when they are feeling sick.

RW, a Delaware Big House adherent, who was violently anti-peyote, insisted that peyote had been used as a war medicine prior to the introduction of the Peyote religion.

49. MESCAL BEAN (*Sophora secundiflora*), Măxkalaxkwsita, "red beans."

The bright red, hard, beans of this shrub were formerly used by some Delaware in a ceremony known as the Red bean cult. Several of the beans were crushed and boiled in water to produce a "tea." After drinking this tea the members were supposedly able to perform superhuman feats. For a discussion of the Red bean cult as practiced by the Delaware and other tribes see Howard (1957). At the present time mescal beans are no longer ingested, but they are still highly prized, and worn as bandoliers by Delaware "straight" War dancers and by peyotists.

50. REDBUD (*Cerds canadensis*), Nènèskakw.

The wood of the redbud is used for firewood in the sacred fire used in the Peyote ceremony. It is selected because it burns evenly and brightly without throwing sparks. RW

51. BLACKJACK OAK (*Quercus marilandica*), Wewchëlitunas.

The leaves of the blackjack are used for the cigarette papers used in rolling prayer cigarettes in the Peyote ceremony. For this purpose leaves are gathered in late summer, cut into cigarette paper size and pressed flat until dry. Since they tend to be somewhat brittle, they are slightly moistened before being rolled. NTD, FW

52. CORNHUSKS (*Zea mays* sp.), Opsko, "white husks."

Fine corn meal was kneaded with cold water, making a cake about a hand's breadth round and an inch thick, enclosing this in corn husks leaves, and baking it in hot ashes under live coals.

Cornhusks are also used for rolling the prayer cigarettes in the Peyote ceremony. The husk layer nearest the ear of corn is used for this purpose. The husks are cut into cigarette paper size and then pressed flat until dry. When properly dried the papers can be wrapped in wax paper and stored. NTD, FW

Cornhusks are used, together with dyed deer hair, as the "hair" element in a miniature Corn dance mask which FW made for James Howard. According to Mr. Washington this is a traditional practice.

53. INDIAN PERFUME, HORSEMINT, or BEE BALM (*Monarda* sp.?)

Winkimakwsko, "sweet smelling grass."

The dried leaves of this plant are crushed and tied up into a small silk scarf which is then attached, usually in pairs, to the bandoliers of a "straight" War dancer so as to hang slightly below either shoulder in back. A similar "bundle" but involving only one bandolier, is sometimes worn by a peyotist.

MISCELLANEOUS DOMESTIC USES

54. CARDINAL FLOWER (*Lobelia cardinalis*), Matapipalinko, "that which is never overlooked."

The root of this plant is used as a philter or love charm. The root is first cleaned and then touched all over the body. NTD commented "Old ladies use it as a love charm. They usually talk to it and offer tobacco to it in secret." All ages can use it as a love charm. NTD

54a. Tobacco or Indian Tobacco (*Nicotiana rustica*), Kwshatay (tobacco) or Lëni Kwshatay (Indian tobacco).



There are various uses of Indian tobacco. Herbalists were paid with gifts of tobacco. Tobacco smoke blown into the ear was believed to be a cure for earache, and holding the smoke in the mouth was a cure for a toothache. A wad of tobacco was chewed into a soft pulp to keep swelling down and reduce the pain if applied to a wasp sting.

Among the Delawares tobacco was considered a magic plant. It was offered to the creator and to other spiritual agents as the occasion warranted. Tobacco was burned like incense in an open fire and was used during prayers and incantations by medicine men.

When an herbalist gathered roots or leaves in the woods he customarily sprinkled tobacco at the base of the plant as an offering to the spirit of the plant. Before the plant was collected a prayer such as this was offered. *"We know that you are good. We know that you have powers. This person is sick, so please help him."*

The offering of tobacco is extremely important because tobacco transmits the message to the spirit force of the plant and if used without a gift of tobacco it was considered weak medicine.

Tobacco was used to quiet angry waters; to allay destructive winds; to seek good luck in hunting; to protect a traveler; to return thanks to the creator; to console the bereaved; and for other religious purposes. Tobacco was also used during the naming ceremony.



In 1970 Nora Dean gives an offering of tobacco to the indwelling spirit of the ocean on her first visit to New Jersey. Her father had told her to do this if she ever went to see the ocean where the Lenape people once lived.

The typical plant mixed with tobacco was sumac. When its leaves turned red in the fall, they mixed half-and-half with tobacco for ceremonial smoking. The use of tobacco for recreational purposes increased among the Delawares after they left their Eastern homeland.



A common way in more recent times to gift tobacco was a sack of Bull Durham

55. DODDER (*Cuscuta*), (Delaware name not secured).



Dodder is known as "love grass." It is employed in a test of a lover's affections. In the late spring you bring a sprig of this plant (which is actually a plant parasite which lives on some bushes) and place it on a bush. If the transplanted sprig grows then your lover is true; if it dries and shrivels, your lover is false. NTD

56. COMPASS PLANT or ROSINWEED (*Silphium laciniatum*), Pkuwakw, "gum plant."



This plant produces a resin on its stem and flower pods, which the Delaware employed much as chewing gum is used at present, NTD. The writer experimented with this and found that the residue possessed an interesting waxy taste.

57. WILD GRAPE (*Vitis sp.*), Wisahkim, "bitter fruit."

The juice from the vine of the grape was noted as a good scalp treatment by NTD. When Mrs. Dean was a young girl, her mother would take her into the woods and there cut a grape vine to gather the sap. Nora would cover her hair with this liquid. She said that this is what has kept her hair shiny and black. The treatment was usually performed when the sap flowed in late winter or early spring.

58. ELDERBERRY (*Sambucus canadensis*), Puhwèsënakw, "pithy tree."

NTD recalled that her father made toy squirt guns out of elderberry stems for her and her brothers when they were children. FW mentioned that elderberries were employed to make a dye used in coloring basket splints.

59. POKEBERRY (*Phytolacca americana*), Chàkinkwèm, (translation not provided)

According to NTD the pokeberry root was used as a tonic for chickens.

60. SLIPPERY ELM (*Ulmus fulva*), Xkwikpi, "slippery elm bark".

Slippery elm bark is used to sweeten and preserve fat. A few sprigs of the bark placed in the fat when rendering suffice to prevent it from spoiling and also gives a nice flavor. NTD The inner bark of the slippery elm is used to repair baskets. Two foot long strips of the inner bark are cut off to use for these repairs. The basket will be tight and sturdy again afterwards. FW

61. HICKORY (*Carya hickori*). Tìtpanimënshi, "bitter nut tree. "

Strips of hickory were used to tie poles together. The poles are bound with strips of green wood and when the wood dries the lashing will be tight. Another use of hickory is in basketry. These are made from the layer of wood just under the bark. A hickory log is pounded completely around to loosen the splints. Next a butcher knife is used to separate the splints from the log. The splints are shaved thin and are then used to make baskets. FW

62. BLACK OAK (*Quercus velutina*), Pahkamakw

The bark of the black oak is boiled to produce a black dye, according to FW. James Howard informs me that prior to 1850 the Delaware were fond of dyeing the buckskin that they used for clothing, bags, etc. a rich black color, probably with this bark and black walnut hulls. .

63. BLACK WALNUT (*Juglans nigra*), tukwim, "round fruit."

Black walnuts are used as a dye. The mature walnuts are boiled with the material which is to be colored black. FW

64. ASH (*Fraxinus* sp.), Mixakanakw (translation not provided).

The wood of the ash was a favorite for making bows. NTD

65. DOGWOOD (*Cornus* sp.), Tuwchalakw, (translation not provided).

Dogwood was the favorite wood for making arrows. NTD

66. BUCKBRUSH (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*), Chikhikanakw, "broom tree."

As the native name would indicate, small brooms were made of buckbrush by the Delaware. Very straight twigs of the plant were gathered. These were tied into a bundle about three inches across and a handle attached at one end. FW

67. ELM (*Ulmus* sp.), Lokanëhunshi (translation not provided).

The Delaware formerly used strips of elm bark to hobble their horses. FW

68. GOURDS (*Cucurbita* sp.), Xkànakhàkw, "bone bottle."

The Delaware shared with groups of the Southeastern culture area the pattern of making many useful items from gourds. These included water bottles, dippers, salt bottles, bird houses, scarf slides, whistles, and rattles for use in dances. At the time of my field work both FW and RW still produced items of this sort, and FW's father Joe Washington had produced a number of items still in his son's possession which I examined. Rounded gourds were used for the bottles, bird houses, and dance rattles. The whistles, scarf slides, and dippers utilize the long, straight neck of carefully selected "long neck" gourds.



Gourd rattle for use in stomp dances

69. COCONUT (*Cocos nucifera*), (Delaware name not learned).

NTD reported that her father made "Stomp dance" rattles from the shell of the coconut. The coconut shell was carefully cleaned of its meat, its outside polished, a few round pebbles placed inside, and fitted with a wooden handle. Such rattles are undoubtedly a recent substitute for the earlier gourd rattle.



Coconut rattle made by James Thompson

70 . CORN STALK (*Zea mays* sp.) Sipakòn

Every Delaware baby was provided with a "witch bird" which was hung over its crib and later its regular bed while it grew up. As the name would indicate, this fetish was for the purpose of deterring witches. The body of such a "witch bird" is made from a section of corn stalk. Wings are made from feathers and a carved wooden head is added. In former times such a "witch bird" was hung by a string over the fireplace where it would swirl and turn in the smoke. NTD

71. STUMP WATER Chichànkpi "mirror water."

Stump water is water which is found in a hollow stump. It forms there like sap inside a tree. The Delaware wash their faces in this liquid to prevent pimples and acne. NTD

72. BUCKEYE (*Aesculus* sp.)

The buckeye seed, according to Speck, was used as a hiding piece in the moccasin game (Speck 1937: 120).

73. WILD BLACK CHERRY (*Prunus serotina*).

Mahr (1954: 385) states that wild black cherry was used as a dyes tuff by the Delaware.

74. MULBERRY (*Morus rubra*). Okhatimënshi,

Zeisberger reports that the Delaware of his day used mulberry branches as the framework for their bark huts.

75. BOG GRASS (*Phragmites australis* subsp. *americanus*)

Speck notes that in the now obsolete game of jackstraws (*Selahtinalitin*) Bog grass was used for the straws: "The furnishings of the game are fifty straws, smooth sections of bog grass about eight inches in length obtained by cutting the stems between the joints." (Speck 1937: 104) The game is no longer played by the Caney River Delaware, though it was remembered by NTD, and James Howard collected a wooden "turner" used in the game from FW which had been made by his father, Joe Washington.

76. COFFEE BEAN TREE (*Gymnocladus canadensis*).

Speck notes that in the Delaware version of the moccasin game a "coffee or buckeye bean or a bullet is used for hiding - just under a glove or moccasin the other persons guess which moccasins he hides the bean or bullet under." (120, 1937).

77. RUSHES (sp. uncertain) Anakànàskw "mat grass"

The Lenape used to make Anakàna – a rush mats. Different styles were made and placed on the sleeping platforms in their houses for people to sit and sleep on. The full size ones were about three to four feet wide and eight to ten feet long.



Delaware woman weaving an Anakàn



*Nora seated on a small anakàn and deerskin
as she cleans Indian potatoes in a rivulet.*

Linguistic Key by James Rementer

Vowels:

a -- a in father

e -- a in late

i -- ee in bee

o -- o in note

u -- u in sue

x -- ch as German 'nacht'

à -- u in cup

è -- e in met

ì -- i in fit

ò -- o in for

ù -- u in pull

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A newspaper article about George Hill's research among the Delawares:

Indians Still Use Early Day Medicine Remedies

Tulsa World
28 September 1969

Some of the concoctions of the early day Indian medicine men have survived into the present day culture of the Delaware Indians of northeastern Oklahoma. Cough medicine still is brewed from the bark of the wild cherry tree, and smoke from cedar needles sometimes is used as a purifying agent.

These and other plant uses by the Delawares were recorded the past summer by George Hill of Ponca City. He gathered them while on an Oklahoma State archaeological dig with Dr. James Howard of the sociology department. Studying horticulture at Oklahoma State, Hill became absorbed in ethnobotany. He spent many summer evenings interviewing Delaware Indians in the Bartlesville area.

"Ethnobotany is a study of the influence of plants on people," Hill explains. He says this work is difficult because there are few ethnobotanists and few books about the subject. "The younger Delawares aren't learning such things, and only a few older persons are left to know about the Indian use of plants," Hill says. "I'm trying to record this before it's lost." Some Delawares still gather wild greens for eating, cook an edible milkweed in stew, and eat a sweet water lily roots that is something like a potato.

"We went out in a field and found a compass plant, or Indian gum plant," Hill says. "There are pieces of a sticky substance along the stem which you can gather and chew. It has a different flavor. You'll never forget it once you chew it."

Hill's major source of information was interviews with two full blooded Delawares, Mrs. Nora Dean of Dewey and Fred Washington of Wann. He did the research with a small grant from OSU research foundation. And he found that the Delawares had remedies for such ailments as chills, ringworm, boils, sore throats, and toothache.

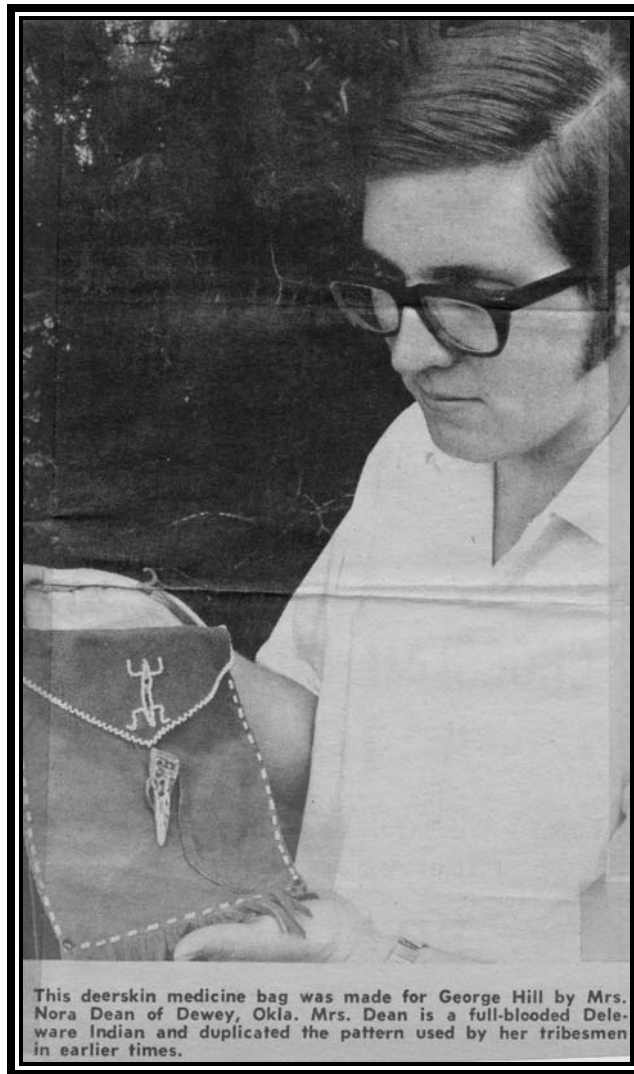
A typical plant which they used was sumac. When its leaves turned red in the fall, they mixed half and half with tobacco for ceremonial smoking. The outer covering was scraped off and the roots were chewed to relieve toothache. Horehound was common for making cough syrup. It was steeped in water and they drank the liquid like warm tea. The bark of wild cherry also was steeped in water to make a bitter drink which relieved coughing.

Cardinal flower was believed to be a love charm that would help the Delaware win the hand of a lover. It was kept and prayed over so it would work its magic charm. When the Delawares found such plants, they placed them in a medicine bag made of skin. Passing by the first plant, the Indian went on to a second of the same kind, Hill was told.

Some plants would receive an offering of tobacco, which was placed in the hole dug in the ground by the plant's roots. Before the plant was collected, a prayer such as this was offered. *"We know that you are good. We know that you have powers. This person is sick, so please help him."*

The stimulant from peyote cactus has come into use in the religious ceremonies of the Native American Church which many Indians attend, Hill says. Delawares have pots of peyote growing at their homes for religious use. The Delawares even had a method of killing flies. They gather leaves of some coffee (bean) trees and put them by the door. Flies were attracted to the leaves, and supposedly would die after eating them.

The medicine could be bad as well as good. While the medicine man or woman worked many cures for the good of the tribe, they also have been known to use them to create curses.



This deerskin medicine bag was made for George Hill by Mrs. Nora Dean of Dewey, Oklahoma. Mrs. Dean is a full-blooded Delaware Indian and duplicated the pattern used by her tribesmen in the earlier times.