

INFUSE

Week 1 - Introduction

Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*)

Gathering
GROUND

INFUSE

Welcome to Sassafras Month!

I feel honored to share about this beautiful tree!

This week we will meet Sassafras in a journey.

Then we'll get to know some of their physical characteristics.

And finally I'll share a simple honoring practice.

Stay Spicy,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.





We begin with an introduction to
Sassafras in the following journey...



meet Sassafras

The common and genus name *Sassafras* comes from Spanish *sasafrás*, based on Latin *saxifraga* (saxifrage) which is thought to mean "rock-breaking" (*saxum* "stone, rock" + *frag-* "to break"). The plant Saxifrage grows in rocky conditions. How *Sassafras* was assigned this name is a bit of a mystery.

The species name *albidum* is Latin for "whiteish" (*albus*, white)



etymology

Other English common names for Sassafras include:

Ague tree

Saxifrax

Cinnamon wood

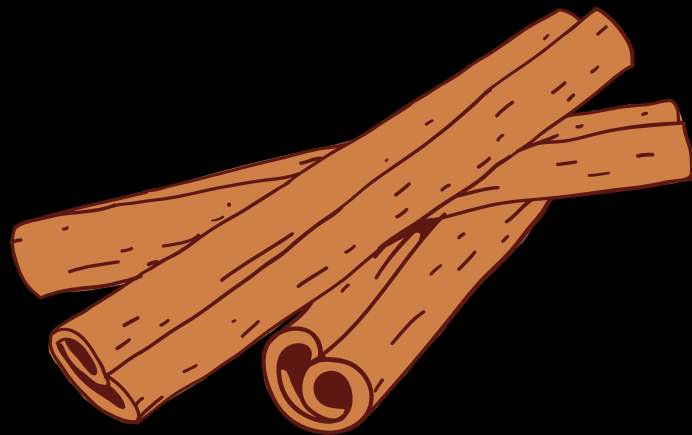
Saloop

Smelling stick

Chewing stick

Tea tree

check out this link for more
fascinating history & etymology



etymology

The Lenape word for Sassafras is *winakw*.
There is a town in New Jersey named Wanaque,
a name derived from a word that means "land of Sassafras"

In Tsalagi (Cherokee), Sassafras is
ᏊᏚᏗᏚᏗ (ganasdatsi)

In Chahta (Choctaw), it's
iti kafi

In Anishinaabe,
maanaagwaakwamizh



etymology

identification



Sassafras is a deciduous tree or shrub in the Lauraceae (Laurel) family. Young trees and shrub forms have greenish bark that is covered with orange-brown fissures. Mature trees have reddish brown, thickly plated bark.



identification

Leaves are waxy and highly mucilaginous.

Three different shaped leaves:
three lobed, entire ovate, mitten shaped



identification

Clusters of tiny, six-petaled, fragrant flowers that are greenish yellow to creamy yellow-white bloom in spring before the leaves emerge.



identification


The leaves and roots have a spicy-minty-floral aroma and flavor. Once you smell the roots you'll recognize the scent as root beer—Sassafras root was once and still is used as an ingredient in that beloved beverage.



identification

Clusters of tiny, six-petaled, fragrant flowers that are greenish yellow to creamy yellow-white bloom in spring before the leaves emerge.



A close-up photograph of several Sassafras berries on a branch. The berries are elongated and have a distinctive two-tone color: a bright red base and a dark, almost black, tip. They are attached to thin, reddish-brown stems. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting foliage.

You'll most often find Sassafras in groves of at least 3 trees. They spread through the roots – look for young shoots to find the connections between trees.

Sassafras also spreads by seed. Animals eat the fruit and deposit the seeds. Sassafras seeds need the cold to germinate.

Image: [Ken Potter](#)
[CC BY-NC 4.0](#)

propagation

gatheringground.nyc

Sassafras is native to the eastern
region of Turtle Island...

In the north, from southwestern
Maine to southern
Ontario and central Michigan; south
down to central Florida; and
southwest to Illinois, Missouri,
eastern Oklahoma, and eastern Texas.



distribution

invitation

Visit a forested path, a field's edge,
or a young woodland.

Sassafras often fills a niche in disturbed soils.

Look for the characteristic bark when the flowers or
leaves are not present yet. Look for the three
distinctive leaf shapes.

Choose a leaf to pick and crush. Is there a distinctive
sweet-spicy fragrance?

If so, you may have found Sassafras!

Make a sketch or painting of Sassafras leaves, or the whole tree, to add to your altar this month.



sketch

Set up an altar to Sassafras. Here are some suggestions for what to include:

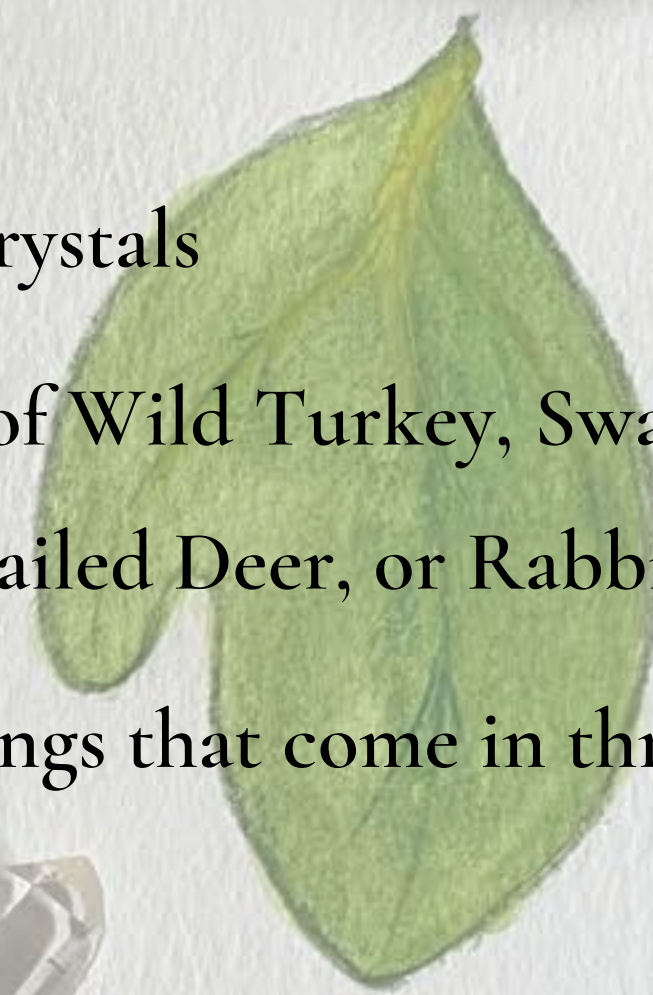
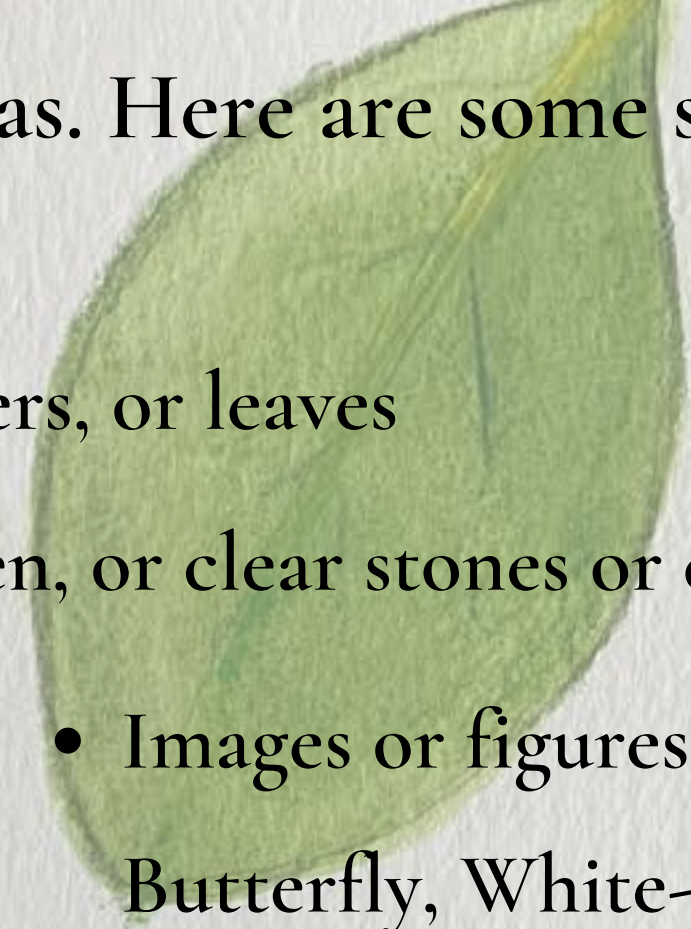
- Art featuring Sassafras

- Sassafras root, bark, flowers, or leaves

- Red, green, or clear stones or crystals

- Images or figures of Wild Turkey, Swallowtail Butterfly, White-tailed Deer, or Rabbit

- Things that come in threes



honoring

Biota of North America Project (BONAP). Sassafras. Accessed April 25, 2022.
Available at: <http://bonap.net/Napa/TaxonMaps/Genus/County/Sassafras>

Neves, Liz. *Northeast Medicinal Plants: Identify, Harvest, and Use 111 Wild Herbs for Health and Wellness*. Portland, OR: Timber Press. 2020.

Sullivan, Janet. 1993. Sassafras albidum. In: Fire Effects Information System, [Online]. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fire Sciences Laboratory (Producer). Available:
<https://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/tree/sasalb/all.html> [2022, April 25].

Wikipedia. Salep. Accessed April 25, 2022. Available at:
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salep>

Yarnell, Eric. *Vanishing North American Materia Medica*. Accessed April 25, 2022.
Available at: <https://traditionalroots.org/wp-content/uploads/Yarnell-Vanishing-North-American-Materia-Medica-NOTES.pdf>



references

INFUSE

Week 2 - Ague Tree

Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*)

Gathering
GROUND

INFUSE

It's Sassafras Week 2!

This week we will visit Sassafras trees and look at the long history of this great ally.

We'll explore the early uses of the leaves, bark, and roots of Sassafras and finally finish up with a simple preparation.

Sweetly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.





Let's go out and visit Sassafras!



meet Sassafras

ancient

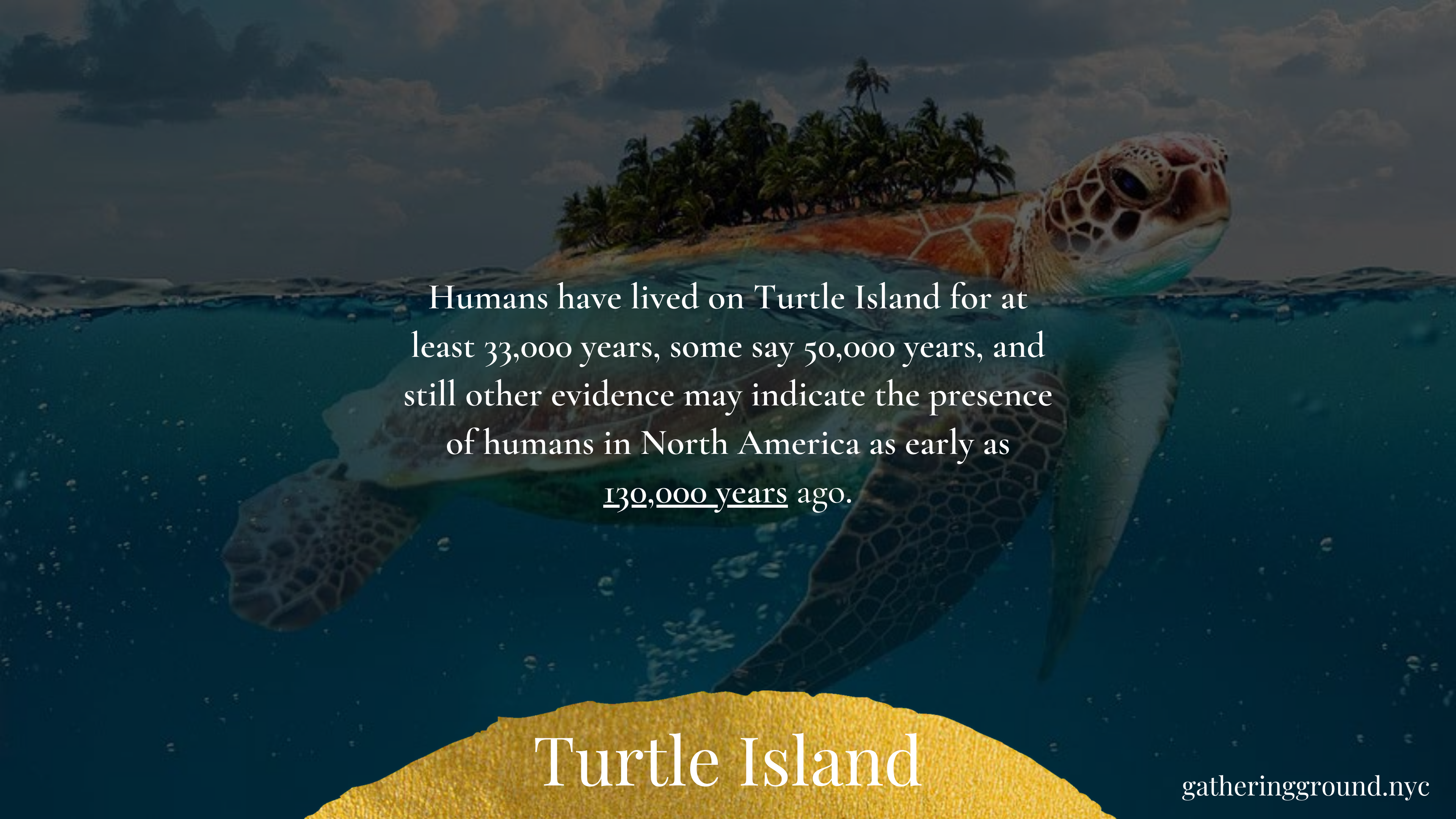
The *Sassafras* genus of plants has been on Earth for at least 100 million years.



~49.5 million year old fossilized leaf from the extinct *Sassafras hesperia*. Early Ypresian, Klondike Mountain Formation, Republic, Ferry County, Washington, USA.

image: [Kevmin](#)



A large sea turtle is swimming in the ocean, its head and front flippers visible above the water. In the background, a small tropical island with palm trees is visible under a cloudy sky. The water is a deep blue-green color.

Humans have lived on Turtle Island for at least 33,000 years, some say 50,000 years, and still other evidence may indicate the presence of humans in North America as early as 130,000 years ago.

Turtle Island

Sassafras + Humans

In one place where Sassafras grows, along the Savannah River in South Carolina, there is potential evidence of human presence dating back 50,000 years ago.

So it's possible that humans have had a relationship with Sassafras for 50,000 years.





Many different people came to live on the land where the Sassafras grows. And as the people changed the interaction with the Sassafras did, too.



The People



collaboration

In the South, people have worked with
Sassafras as:

A decoction of the roots is taken to thin the
blood (Choctaw) and purify the blood
(Cherokee/Tsalagi)

An infusion of the root is used to treat
worms, diarrhea, and to remedy colds
(Cherokee/Tsalagi, Seminole)

collaboration

In the North, people have worked with
Sassafras as:

An infusion of the root bark is used to thin
the blood (Anishinaabe, Lenape) and reduce
high blood pressure (Haudenosaunee)

An infusion of young shoots used as a wash
for sore eyes (Mohegan)



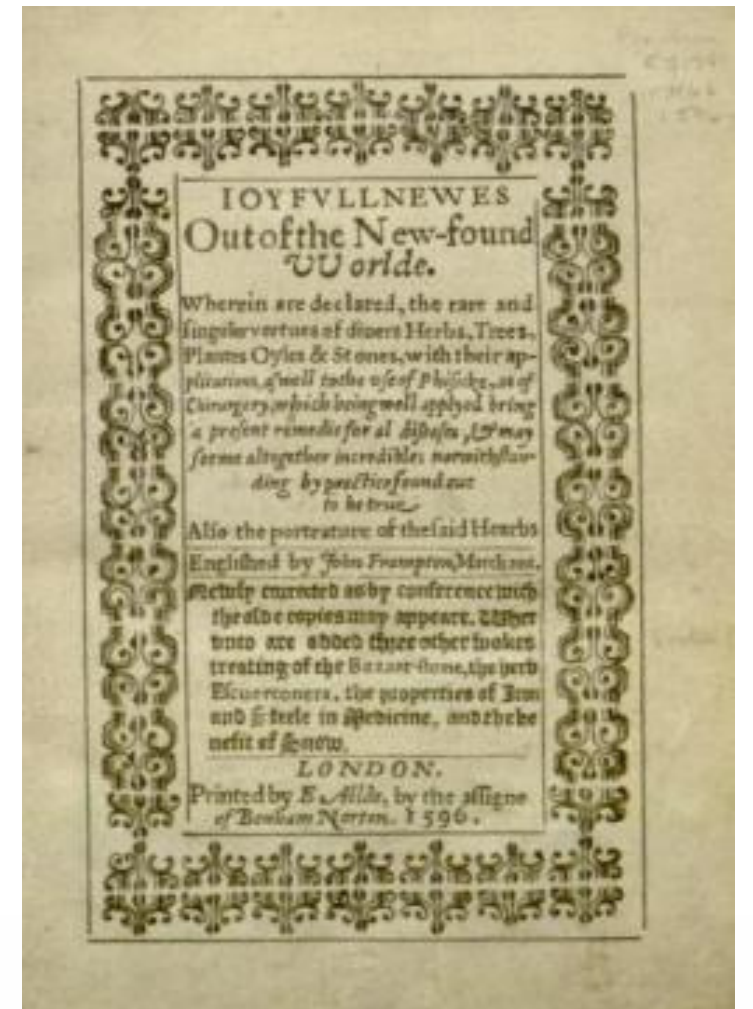


Colonists from Europe saw the plants and animals as commodities to be bought and sold. Sassafras was one of the first plants to be celebrated as a medicine, a trade spice, and other valuable uses.

colonization



Spanish botanist Nicolás Monardes* wrote about Sassafras, and other plants, in *Joyfull Newes out of the New Founde Worlde* (originally published 1569, translated into English by John Frampton in 1577).

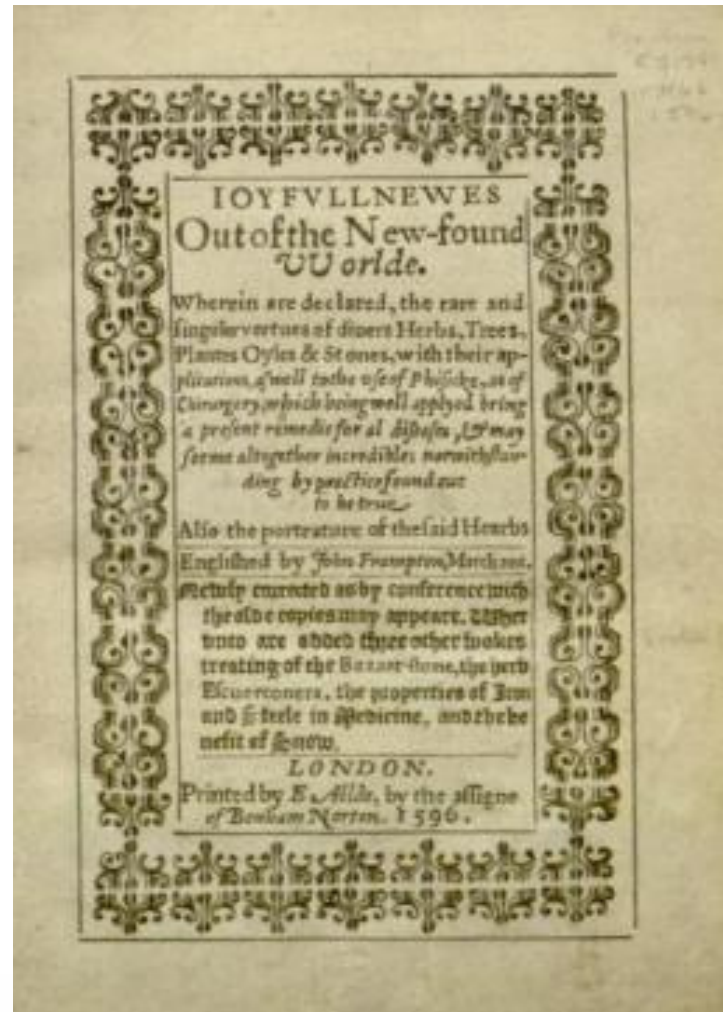


*We'll hear about this guy again in August when we work with Bee Balm (*Monarda*).



colonization

Ague Tree




The maner of curying with this water made of the Sassafras, for the Tertian Agewes and large Fevers, I will shewe you what doeth passes in this yere, that I doe write this. There have beene many people diseased with the Tertian Agewes, so importunate that no maner of Medicine was sufficient to take them awaie, and to roote them out, in so muche that we did let many alone, with onely good order, and good government, without healpying them any more. They did remaine opilated, and with evill colour of the face, and some swolne.

And in this tyme it was, when the Captaine generall Peter Mellendis came from the Florida, and brought with hym in common this woodde of the Sassafras, and as everie man did so praise it, many of them that had Tertians did take Water of the Sassafras, keepyng the order that the Souldiers gave them, and surely I sawe in this greate marvailles, for that they healed many with the use thereof. Not onely of the Tertians that so muche did molest them, but of the Opilations and evill colour that they had.



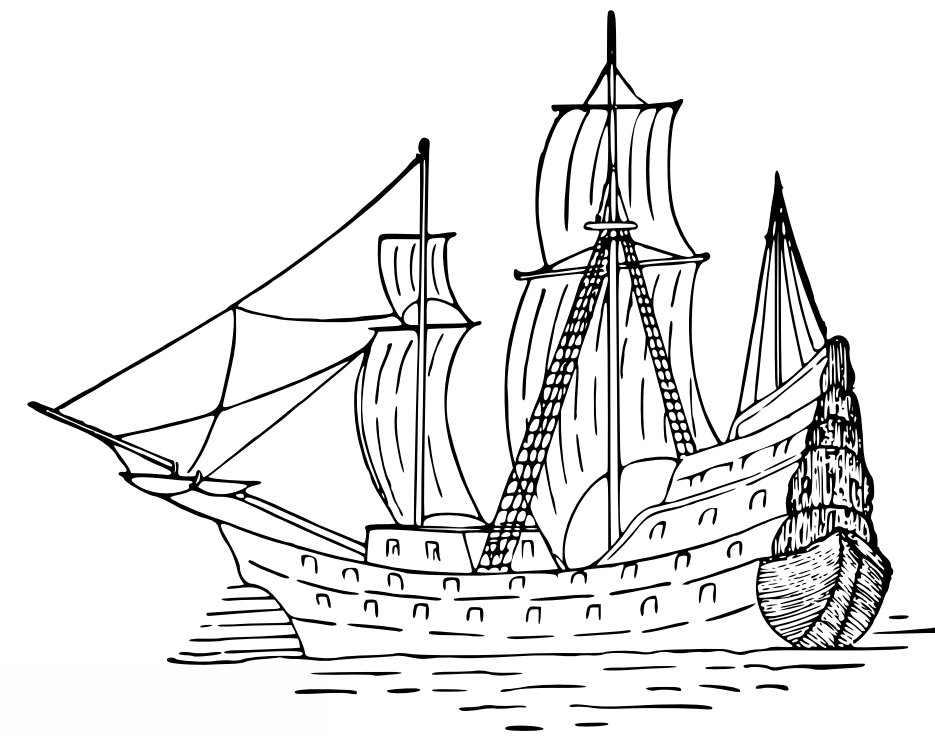
*from Nicolás Monardes, Joyfull
Newes out of the New Founde Worlde*

gatheringground.nyc



The text by Monardes and one by Thomas Harriot titled *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia* (1588) spurred excitement for the trade of Sassafras throughout England and Europe.

Soon well known herbalists (John Gerard, Nicholas Culpepper) were quoting Monardes and touting the benefits of Sassafras. Ships were sent to the newly colonized land expressly to collect Sassafras for medicinal and culinary use and for the hard wood of the tree.



commodification

Of the new foundland of Virginia.

9

Sassafras.

Sassafras, called by the inhabitantes *Winauk*, a kinde of wood of most pleasand and sweete smel; and of most rare vertues in phisick for the cure of many diseases. It is found by experience to bee farre better and of more vses then the wood which is called *Guaiacum*, or *Lignum vita*. For the description, the manner of vsing and the manifold vertues thereof, I referre you to the booke of *Monardus*, translated and entituled in English, *The ioyfull newes from the West Indies*.

from Thomas Harriot's *A briefe and true report
of the new found land of Virginia* (1588)

winauk

The name *winauk* described in this account is likely from an Algonquian speaking group - if you recall from the last lesson, *winakw* is the Lenape word for this tree.

The best of all the tree is the root, and that worketh the best effect, the which hath the rinde cleaving very fast to the inner part, and is of colour tawnie, and much more sweet of smell than all the tree and his branches.

The rinde tasteth of a more sweet smell than the tree; and the water being sod with the root is of greater and better effects than any other part of the tree, and is of a more sweet smell, and therefore the Spaniards use it, for that it worketh better and greater effects.

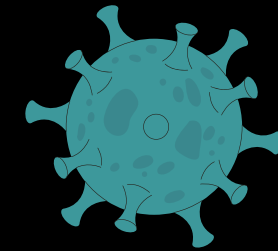
It is a tree that groweth unto the sea, and in temperate places that have not much drouth, nor moisture. There by mountaines growing full of them, and they cast forth a most sweet smell, so that at the beginning when they saw them first, they though they had seen trees of Cinnamon, and in part they were not deceived; for that the rinde of this tree hath as sweet a smell as Cinnamon hath, and doth imitate it in colour and sharpnesses of taste, and pleasantnesse of smell; and so the water that is made of it is is of a most sweet smell and taste, as the Cinnamon is, and procureth the same works and effects as Cinnamon doth.

*from John Gerard's *The herball or Generall historie of plantes* (1597, edited Johnson edition 1633)*

Cinnamon Tree

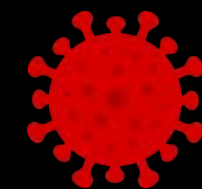
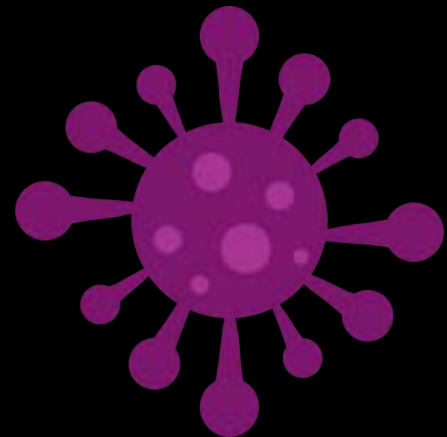
new diseases

Uses for Sassafras changed post-colonial contact,
often out of necessity.



The detrimental effects of colonization – such as forced
removals – along with the introduction of new diseases left
First Peoples susceptible to illness.

For example, the Houma, Choctaw, and Rappahannock began
using Sassafras to treat measles and scarlet fever, two diseases
that were either not present or not a problem pre-contact.



Sassafras isn't just used for disease, though. It's also utilized as a beverage and for food. We'll look at more of those uses in future lessons.

One way to prepare Sassafras as both medicine and as a tea is in a cold infusion (tapàsikàn in Lenape). In the following video I'll show you how to make this preparation with dried Sassafras leaves.



prepare



How to make
tapàsikàn [ni]

Cold infusion of fresh or dried leaves

Fill a jar with fresh leaves or about 1/4
of the way with dried leaves,
cover with cold water and let steep
for 1 hour or more.

Drink 1 cup as needed.

- Zimmer, Carl. Humans Lived in North America 130,000 Years Ago, Study Claims. New York Times. April 26, 2017 Accessed May 3, 2022. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/26/science/prehistoric-humans-north-america-california-nature-study.html>
- Monardes, Nicolás. Joyfull Newes Out of the Newe Founde Worlde. Accessed May 3, 2022. Available at: https://books.google.com/books?id=Hx2oAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=sassafras&f=false
- Hariot, Thomas. A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia. 1585. Accessed May 3, 2022. Available at: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/hariot/hariot.html>
- Findley, James. Indian Uses for Sassafras. History Smash. Accessed May 3, 2022. Available at: <https://historymash.com/2016/11/17/indian-medicinal-uses-for-sassafras/>
- Findley, James. How Were the English Introduced to Sassafras? History Smash. Accessed May 3, 2022. Available at: <https://historymash.com/2017/07/11/how-were-the-english-introduced-to-sassafras/>



references

INFUSE

Week 3 - Root Medicine

Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*)

Gathering
GROUND

INFUSE

Week 3 of Sassafras is here!

This week we'll dive into the medicinal uses of Sassafras.

We'll also harvest the root.

And make a sweet delicious syrup with it!

With sass,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal tail on the final letter.





Sassafras by Megan Grace

sometimes my mouth was too
sharp, my tongue was too
fast, my eyebrow would
arch just a bit too high
and you would get
that slow smile
I loved, say
"whoa there,
sassafras."

but you still loved
me in my sassiest
m o m e n t s



*Sometimes,
Sassafras is slang for
someone who is sassy*

*cheeky
bold
audacious
(if not outright rude)*

*the obvious root of this association is in the sound - and yet -
could the sweet spicyness of Sassafras not evoke a bit of sass?*

sass





That sweet spicyness tells us about the medicine of this tree.

The root is warming and aromatic, it's stimulating to circulation and digestive processes.

Sassafras gets things flowing, moving.

Let's see how this aligns with some of the traditional medicinal uses of the roots of Sassafras...

warming

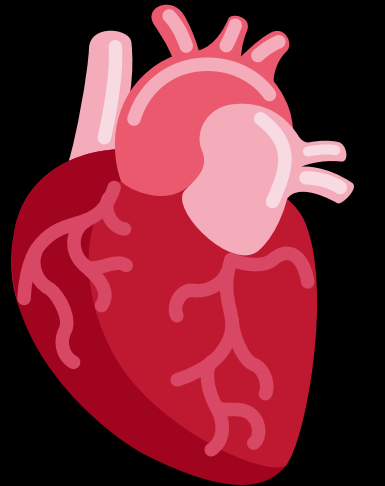


circulation & blood

Sassafras lowers blood pressure & cholesterol,
improves blood sugar & insulin resistance

The root is traditionally used as a blood purifier and
spring tonic by many peoples (Lenape, Cherokee,
Haudenosaunee, Rappahannock)

Pith at center of heartwood used to treat high blood
pressure (Muskogee, Haudenosaunee)



circulation & blood



According to late herbalist Tis Mal Crow (Muskogee tradition): Drink root bark tea to lower body temperature in summer. Use powdered leaves externally to warm extremities in winter (add to boots & mittens).

The Lenape take Sassafras to cool the blood in cases of fever and chills especially when caused by going barefoot or swimming too early in spring.



Sassafras root bark is also used traditionally to treat:

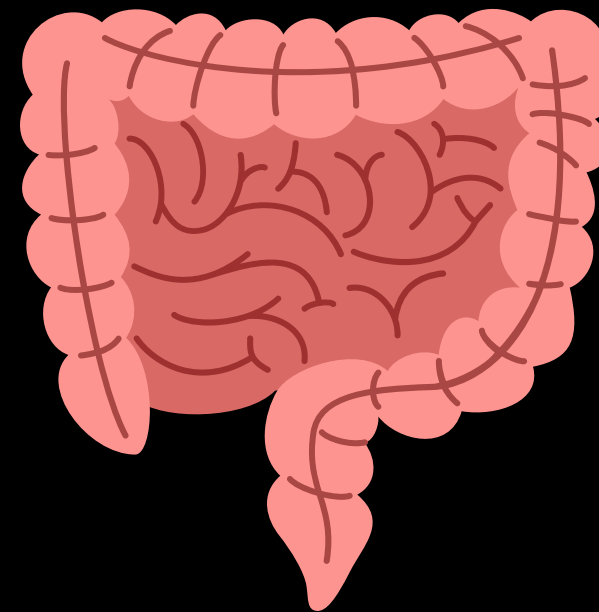
worms (Cherokee, Haudenosaunee)

diarrhea (Cherokee)

nausea, stomach pains, vomiting, appetite loss, constipation (Seminole)

root combined with Sweet flag (*Acorus calamus*,

A. americanus) root for intestinal pains (Lenape)

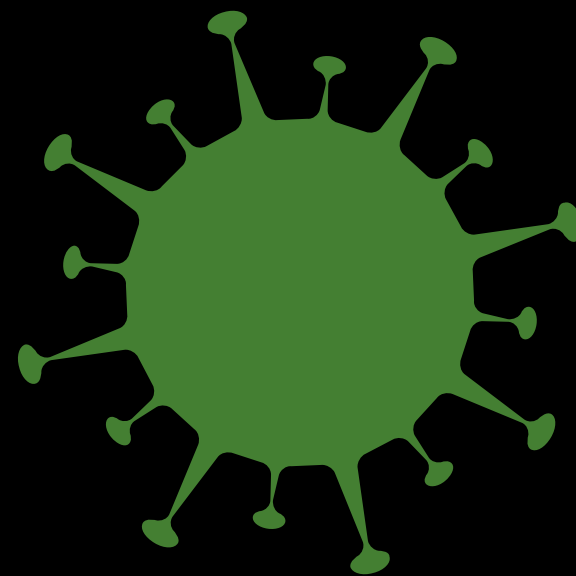


gastrointestinal

immune

Sassafras has antimicrobial properties and is used to treat cold symptoms, including cough and sore throat, and to ease fever and chills
(Nanticoke)

It has been used to treat measles and scarlet fever (Houma, Rappahannock, Choctaw)



Chinese medicine

Sassafras tzumu is a species of *Sassafras* native to China.

In Chinese medicine, *Sassafras* is used to treat rheumatism (pain, arthritis) and wounds.

adapt

The 3 different leaf shapes of Sassafras tell me about variation and adaptability.

Sassafras helps us adapt to fluctuations and changing situations - changing seasons, temperatures, and pressures.

The phrase *don't rest on your laurels* comes to mind. (Sassafras is in the Lauraceae (Laurel) family). It's a good reminder to be prepared for change at any moment – Sassafras helps us navigate this.





Sassafras root cortex contains

6-9% essential oil, including the compounds

safrole (80-85% of the total oil) (antimicrobial, diaphoretic)

safrole camphor (3.25%) (analgesic, dispersing)

methyleugenol (1.1%) (anesthetic)

tannins (sassafrid) (astringent)

mucilage (coats/lubricates mucous membranes)

sitosterol (lowers blood cholesterol)

constituents

1% of the oil includes

pinene (analgesic, anti-inflammatory, relaxant, neuroprotective)

eugenol, 5-methoxyeugenol (antiseptic, antinociceptive)

apoil (emmenagogue, regulates menstruation)

estragol (antioxidant, anxiolytic, smooth muscle relaxant)

myristicin (induces euphoria in high doses)



constituents



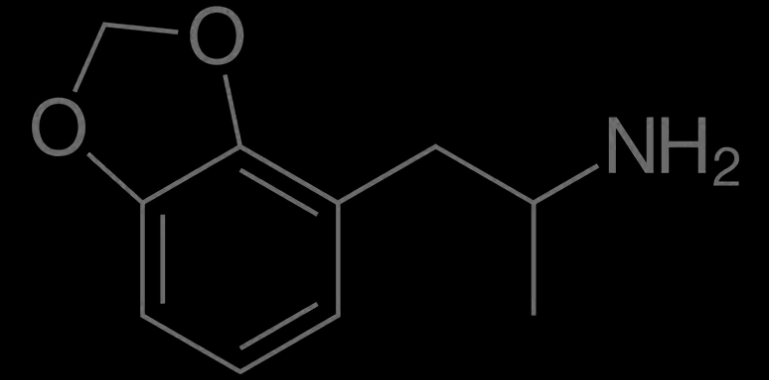
Early 19th century Europeans used the essential oil to treat a variety of conditions. They used it to mask the flavor of opium in preparations given to small children "to keep them quiet and 'well-behaved.'"

(White Rabbit Institute of Healing)

The oil is also used to make soap and cosmetics. It is difficult to find because it has been banned in the US. If you do find it, camphor is likely added.

essential oil

MDA



The recreational drug MDA (Methylenedioxyamphetamine), also known as Sass, Sassafras, or Sally (related to ecstasy or MDMA) can be derived from safrole oil from the Sassafras tree. It stimulates the release of neurotransmitters, creating a sense of euphoria.

Personally, I don't need to take safrole in that way in order to get a natural high from this plant. Spending time with Sassafras, taking in the scent, drinking the tea - that's enough for me!

safrole

In a mid-twentieth-century study, safrole—a constituent isolated from *Sassafras* leaves and root—given in high concentrations to rats was shown to be carcinogenic, in rats.

Safrole is also found in cinnamon, nutmeg, basil, and anise.

Safrole is not water soluble, and on top of that, traditional use of *Sassafras* is not the same as taking safrole on its own (without the rest of the *sassafras* leaf or root). In short, drinking moderate amounts of the decoction or infusion of *sassafras* is perfectly safe.

A person's hands are shown holding a bunch of purple flowers. The hands are positioned over a large, textured paper bag. The person is wearing a gold bracelet on their right wrist and a colorful braided bracelet on their left wrist. The background is dark.

What will you leave as an offering
to Sassafras?

Here are some ideas:

Tobacco

Sweet herbs or flowers

Stones or crystals

Some of your hair

A song

A bouquet of purple flowers is shown, tied with a white ribbon. The bouquet is positioned in the bottom right corner of the image. The background is dark.

offerings

gatheringground.nyc

harvest

Look for saplings or suckers in full shade of abundant Sassafras groves.

They're fairly easy to pull up out of the ground after a little light digging with a hand trowel. You can also find the roots that connect mature mother trees to the saplings and dig some of those. Start with the sapling and unearth it, following the root closer to the mother tree.

Gather when the ground is soft, from spring through fall. Small roots can be used as is. For larger roots, strip off the outer layer and simmer the inner bark to make tea or syrup.





Let's go out and find some
Sassafras roots to harvest.



wildcraft

gatheringground.nyc

root beer



Sassafras is one of the original ingredients of the commercialized beverage, root beer.

Before Pharmacist Charles Elmer Hires became the first person to successfully market a commercial brand of root beer in 1875, First People of these lands brewed their own root tea from this and other flavorful and medicinal roots. It was a tea such as this that inspired Hires in the first place.



root beer

Settlers adopted beverages such as Sassafras root "tea" and fermented them - crafting beverages that were more sanitary than the water during those times (European colonists did not know how to care for the water, and sadly, we are still experiencing the effects of this negligence).

Today we have carbonated versions of these beverages, rather than fermented. Though you could ferment your own if you wanted, a much quicker way to make your own soda is to craft a syrup and just add seltzer.



root beer

In this video I'll share how to make your own simple
Sassafras root syrup to enjoy homemade root beer -
sweetened to your liking.



Do not use Sassafras if you are taking medications with blood-thinning or blood-clotting actions.

Sassafras should not be used during pregnancy due to its blood-thinning effects.



precautions

Crow, Tis Mal. Native Plants, Native Healing:
Traditional Muskogee Way. Summertown, TN: Native Voices. 2001.

Cummings, Kate. Sassafras Tea: Using a Traditional Method of Preparation to Reduce the
Carcinogenic Compound Safrole. Clemson University Tiger Prints. Accessed October 8, 2021.
Available at: https://tigerprints.clemson.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2345&context=all_theses

Moerman, Daniel E. Native American Medicinal Plants: An Ethnobotanical Dictionary.
Portland, OR: Timber Press. 2009.

Neves, Liz. Northeast Medicinal Plants: Identify, Harvest, and Use III Wild Herbs for Health and
Wellness. Portland, OR: Timber Press. 2020.

Tantaquidgeon, Gladys. A Study of Delaware Indian Medicine Practice and Folk Belief
(Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Dept. of Public Instruction, Pennsylvania Historical
Commission). 1942.

[https://thedruidsgarden.com/2017/08/20/sacred-tree-profile-sassafras-medicine-magic-
mythology-and-meaning/](https://thedruidsgarden.com/2017/08/20/sacred-tree-profile-sassafras-medicine-magic-mythology-and-meaning/)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Root_beer



references

INFUSE

Week 4 - Leafy Goodness

Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*)

Gathering
GROUND

INFUSE

It's Week 4 of Sassafras!

Have you ever been down to New Orleans? If so maybe you've tried a Louisiana specialty that I'll tell you about in this lesson.

We will also be harvesting the leaves of Sassafras, a key ingredient in this dish.

And I'll share about the other beneficial uses of the leaves, too.

Laissez les bons temps rouler,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail.



leaves

We've talked about the root, now let's look at the many ways Sassafras leaves are used...

topical use

Topically, leaves are traditionally used as poultice for wounds and sores and as a wash for sore eyes (Cherokee, Haudenosaunee, Mohegan, Rappahannock)

topical use



Apply a poultice of the mucilaginous leaves or inner root bark to soothe sprains, bruises, burns, and bites.



topical use



There is a thought in some herbal circles that the remedy one needs for an ailment is not far from the cause of that ailment. In other words, the herbs we need show up when and where we need them.

For example, Poison Ivy often grows where Sassafras does. (As does another Poison Ivy remedy, Jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*).

To relieve Poison Ivy rash or clear up weepy wounds, dust the powdered leaf on the affected area.





Let's go out and find some Sassafras
leaves to harvest.



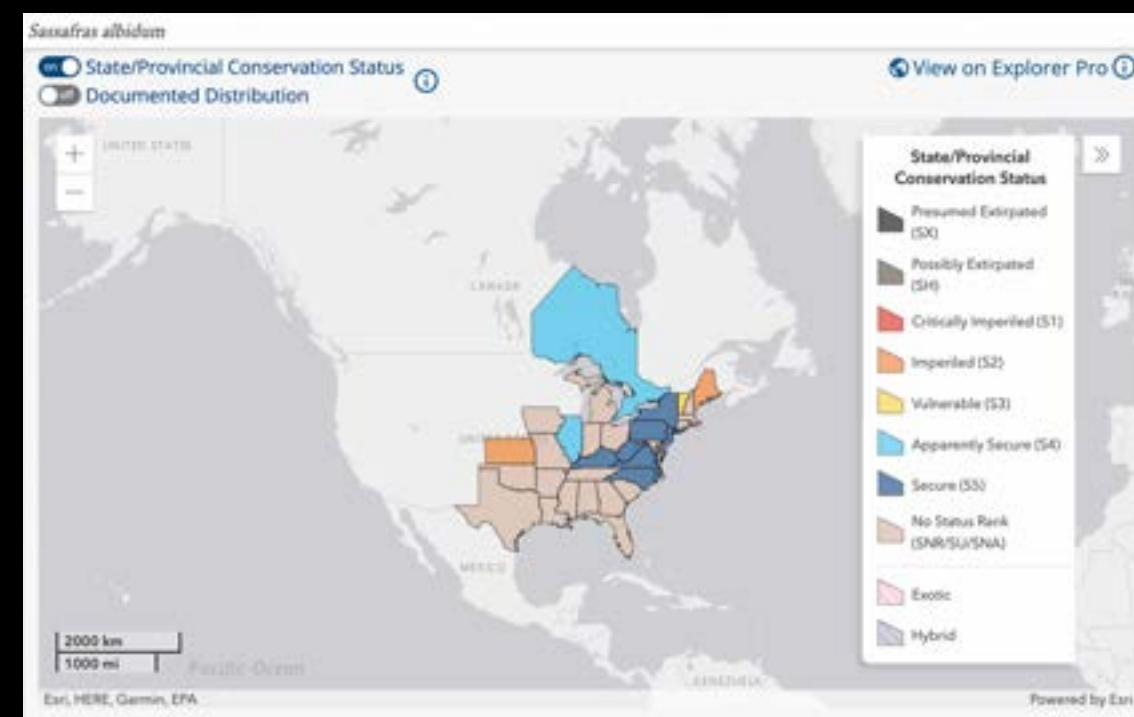
wildcraft

gatheringground.nyc

conservation

While Sassafras is considered "secure" globally, the tree is "imperiled" in Maine and Kansas and "vulnerable" in Vermont.

Get to know the local trees in your area, be aware, and take only what you need.



Source: [NatureServe Explorer](#)



Aside from making an infusion with the leaves, as we did in week 2, dried and powdered Sassafras leaves are traditionally used in cooking and known as filé powder in Creole circles, originating from the Choctaw people in the South.

Use the powder in culinary preparations to add flavor and thicken sauces, soups, and stews.



filé

filé gumbo

Let's get cookin'!

The following recipe is adapted from one on a [Louisiana travel site](#). Instead of making a roux as the flavor base, this recipe uses filé powder, which is one of the traditional ways to make it. Though really, okra is the original thickening ingredient. Gumbo's origins are a blending of West African, Choctaw, and European influences. [I recommend reading about the history of gumbo](#), and the strong argument that this dish is most closely connected with West African traditions.



Watch the video to see how I make it.



filé gumbo

1 1/2 lbs chicken thighs
3/4 lb spicy sausage (I used Mexican chorizo)
1/2 lb sliced ham
1 lb peeled & deveined shrimp
1/2 pound scallops
1 small onion, diced
6 cloves garlic, minced
1 red bell pepper, diced
2 stalks celery, chopped
1/4 cup flour
4 cups broth
3 bay leaves
5 sprigs of fresh thyme
1 1/2 tbsp filé powder (or to taste)
salt & pepper to taste
vegetable oil to coat the pot

Recipe adapted from
Louisiana Travel, originally
published in Louisiana
Kitchen and Culture
Magazine.

filé gumbo

Add enough oil to coat the bottom of the cooking pot. Heat over medium heat. Add the ham and brown it. Add the onion and cook until soft. Add the sausage and chicken. Cook until chicken is browned on both sides.

Add shrimp and the rest of the vegetables and seasoning except for the filé. Mix well. Dust flour over the mixture and stir until everything is coated. Add broth.

Bring up to a simmer and cook for 40 minutes. Add the scallops and simmer for 5 more minutes.

Turn off the heat and add filé powder to taste. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve over rice.



Sassafras attracts insects, such as the Promethea silkmoth (*Callosamia promethea*) and the Spicebush Swallowtail butterfly (*Papilio troilus*). Sassafras is one of the only two plants that act as host to the latter species. (Spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*) is the other, as the name suggests.)

Birds eat the fruit. Deer, Black Bears, Woodchucks, and Rabbits occasionally browse the leaves.



Spicebush Swallowtail image: [Hagerty Ryan](#), USFWS

Female Promethea image: [Jomegat](#)

fauna

gatheringground.nyc

precautions

Do not use Sassafras if you are taking medications with blood-thinning or blood-clotting actions.

Sassafras should not be used during pregnancy due to its blood-thinning effects.

further reading

The Owensboro Sassafras Tree

Sacred Tree Profile: Sassafras' Medicine, Magic, Mythology and Meaning (Druid's Garden)

Cumberland Island National Seashore
(Timucua people and Sassafras)

Vanishing North American Materia Medica
(pages 8-10)



disclaimer

The statements herein have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. The recipes and information in this course are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.

This course is also not meant to replace medical care. If you are in need of medical assistance, please reach out to a qualified healthcare practitioner.

Sassafras albidum. Wikipedia. Accessed May 17, 2022. Available at:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sassafras_albidum

Sassafras. Wikipedia. Accessed May 17, 2022. Available at:
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sassafras>

Moerman, Daniel E. *Native American Medicinal Plants: An Ethnobotanical Dictionary*.
Portland, OR: Timber Press. 2009.

Neves, Liz. *Northeast Medicinal Plants: Identify, Harvest, and Use III Wild Herbs for Health and
Wellness*. Portland, OR: Timber Press. 2020.

Tantaquidgeon, Gladys. *A Study of Delaware Indian Medicine Practice and Folk Belief*
(Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Dept. of Public Instruction, Pennsylvania Historical
Commission). 1942.

Wagner-Reiss, Katherine. *Plant Names Tell Their Stories: Spicy Sassafras albidum*. Morris
Arboretum University of Pennsylvania. Accessed May 17, 2022. Available at:
[https://cms.business-services.upenn.edu/morrisarboretum-blog/409-plant-names-tell-their-
stories-spicy-sassafras-albidum.html](https://cms.business-services.upenn.edu/morrisarboretum-blog/409-plant-names-tell-their-stories-spicy-sassafras-albidum.html)



references