Wildcrafting in Humboldt

Nicholas A. Perdue
Humboldt State University, nap422@humboldt.edu

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Wildcrafting is the practice of foraging beneficial plants from their natural, wild habitat for edible or medicinal purposes. The forest, dunes, and pastures of Humboldt County are all filled with abundant and easily distinguishable plants to begin your practice of wildcrafting medicine.

In the dune ecosystems near Manila and Samoa you can find yarrow, California poppy, primrose, goldenrod, pacific aster, coyote bush, chickweed, and bull thistle. The entire plant of the California poppy can be used to make a tincture that provides a gentle sedative and pain reliever. An oil made from yarrow flowers is great for cuts and cracked skin, and a hydrosol from coyote bush can capture the sweet and earthy scent of the dunes following the rain.
The redwood forests surrounding Humboldt are filled with medical plants. Elderberry, wild rose, nettles, Oregon grape, yerba buena, trillium, California spikenard, and wild ginger can be found in the Redwoods. Edible redwood sorrel, miner’s lettuce, and a variety of berries and mushrooms can also be found in the forest. A syrup from elderberries boosts immunity and a tea of wild ginger and yerba buena is good for digestion. Be mindful not to forage in state and national parks. Better to stick to trails deep in the Arcata and Eureka community forests.

The pastures, fields, and riparian areas in Humboldt also provide spaces to forage for medical plants. Look in these open spaces for gumweed, St. John’s wort, spearmint, angelica, self-heal, California mugwort, and valerian, and the spring leaf buds of maple, oak, and cottonwood trees. A tincture of gumweed is an effective remedy for cleaning the lungs of pollutants and smoke, while oil made from cottonwood buds is an anti-inflammatory and pain reliever.