

---

# PLANTS OF THE CHEROKEE AND THEIR USES

---

Hannah Dinkins Western Carolina University



*“Each Tree, Shrub, and Herb down to the Grasses and Mosses, agreed to furnish a cure for some one of the diseases named and each said: ‘I shall appear to help Man when he calls upon me in his need’”.*

*~ Moony*

# History between the land and the Cherokee people the past, present and future.

## *Historically*

The Cherokee lands were comprised of eight states which ranged as far north as Kentucky and as far south as Georgia and expanded as far east and west as North Carolina to Tennessee. The Cherokee people believe they have lived in this region of the Appalachian Mountains since the beginning of time, because to them all life began here. The original mother town was known as Kituwah, it determined where all Cherokee life and law came from. Scientifically, Archaeologist thought the Cherokee people have been evident in this area for 1200 years, which coincided with the Barren Straight theory. However, current archaeologist digs have provided them with artifacts which support that Cherokee people have been here for at least 1400-1500 years.

The Cherokee people historically had a close vital connection to the land. Cherokee diet consisted of a diverse amount of plants, plants were used for foods, medicine and clothing. Cherokee people never had any domesticated animals except for a dog, this was due to how well they managed their natural resource and landscape. The landscape would be manipulated and managed to make mosaic green-ways that allowed them easy availability to animals for hunting purposes, most of their hunting grounds were in Kentucky and Virginia. Fire was also used as a management tool and was present on the landscape at least once every ten years if not more frequent. It has been said Cherokee forestry was far superior to today's National park forestry that is used.

Cherokee connection to the land was attributed by their view and appreciation for it, to them the land was their everything. Cherokee saw the land as something similar to a deity, which is why they performed dances and ceremonies that gave thanks back to the land. Different aspects of the land were used for everyday life from housing, clothes, medicine, food, and its where they raised their children. Cherokee believe if it wasn't for their strong connection to, they would not be here. There has always been a connection between the land and the Cherokee people. Cherokee people have a very strong tie to the land not only for how they used their natural resources but also the appreciation of those. They viewed every aspect of nature to have life, which not only included plants and animals but also the rocks and streams as well. Every aspect was believed to have a voice. Everyone's voice was the same and valued because it sustained the Cherokee, this was true in the natural world as much as it was true in their civilized culture. The youngest child's voiced opinion mattered just as much as an elder.

Many Cherokee people contribute their longevity and presence on the landscape because they view the earth as their home. They would pray by the water. Since the Cherokee viewed the earth not only as their home but also as their mother, they regarded her with reverence and believed if you took care of mother, she would take care of you. The Cherokee people believed deeply in their connection that they came from the earth and when they die, they will be returned

to the earth, which is why when they are buried they are buried in a fetal position on their side and painted in red paint to signify the blood of the earth. Cherokee word Tohi means “the right way”. How “the right way” relates to the Cherokee culture in the essence is taking care of the land and their relationship to it. One rule that would sum up Tohi: only take what you need not what you want. They wanted to conserve their resources for the next generation and their future. It was the understood rule among the Cherokee people that when you were searching for a plant or other resource you needed, you always passed up the first source of what you were looking for and collected the second source you found. This ensured them the first source would be there for the second generation. This gave way to their belief in sustainable harvesting, where the Cherokee people only took what they needed to support themselves and their families. Sustainable harvesting was accomplished by allowing their crops and natural resources from the land to be evenly disbursed and grown across the landscape.

In Cherokee society their roles and cultural stores reflect their beliefs of the land. Agriculture and managing their native vegetation were viewed as shared responsibilities. One of the seven clans, known as the Wild Potato Clan, were the keepers of seed for the next year’s crops. These responsibilities were associated with women due to Selu. Selu was the corn mother, and she also gave beans and squash from her body to the Cherokee people. These three crops, corn, beans and squash, are known as the three sisters. Women were protected and highly valued because of their ability to create and give life. The Cherokee nation was a matriarchal society. Women were the heads of households, heads of villages, and had roles of beloved women, war women, and Clan mothers which had the ultimate say. While Kanati which was Selu’s husband was known to be the great hunter and provider. This determined men’s roles in society, which were to be sustainable hunters providing game and strength when going war. Men were seen to be more expendable. The ways of the Cherokee didn’t believe the provider/sustainer of life (man) should be separated from the giver of life (woman).

### *Current day*

In reality if you think about the Cherokee people and their first interaction and experience with European settlers was in 1500s. It took European 300s to reach the western side of the Appalachian Mountains, but it only took Europeans 100s year to get from there to the Pacific Ocean.

Cherokee people first contact with Europeans was in 1540 when Hernando DeSoto’s explored the southeastern United States. As more settlers began to come west into the Appalachian Mountains and trade and intermarriage between the Cherokee and English, Scots and Irish became prominent. Areas in North Carolina became trading posts among different areas such “Middle Towns” along the Little Tennessee River, the “Valley Towns” along the Hiwassee and Valley Rivers, and the “Out Towns” on the Tuckasegee and Oconaluftee Rivers. This was the first time the Cherokee broke their idea of sustainable harvest was with traders. They would hunt enough deer to collect however many pelts they needed in order for them to stack up to the height of a rifle/musket. This begin to be common with other resources that traders desired such as herbs and other plants. The amount of unsustainable harvesting led to decline of the Cherokee people because they lost their food sources and the large areas that contained them and they were

not enough to match the mass of people in the Cherokee nation who were in need. The Cherokee began to break with their connection to the land when European colonization arrived. Colonization broke the connection the Cherokee people had with their traditional foods and uses of plants. The Cherokee would make deals with the government which resulted in them systemically losing their lands or settlers constantly encroached on it which then reduced the boundary lines ever slowly. This was seen as a result of the French and Indian war during 1754-1763 and the American Revolutionary war (1775-1783) when the Cherokee sided with the British. Even though the Cherokee assimilate with European culture and has a written language from Sequoyah, they were forced out of their homelands. Treaty of New Echota in 1835 was signed by a group of few Cherokee leaders that agreed to relocate the entire Cherokee Nation to western lands where some of the tribe had already relocated. Roughly 16,000 Cherokees were forced travel the six to seven-month journey known as the trail of tears to “Indian Territory” in Oklahoma. However Principal Chief John Ross refused to sign the Treaty and urged the Cherokee people to stay in their homelands, which they did by fleeing into the mountains waiting for the right moment to emerge and rebuild their lives. Descendants of the Cherokee that fled into the mountains make up the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians that live within the Qualla boundary which is comprised of five Counties of Western North Carolina.

Today many of their descendants today still do feel a connection to the land. It is fairly recently that the Cherokee people do not know the traditional foods during the 1920s-1930s. There is a self-conscious connect the Cherokee people have to the land, today people many go away for college or work for two to three years but always find their way back to their homeland. They want to preserve their native lands and its natural resources to what they traditionally had. Some young people are wanting to go back to the Cherokee way and want to know how to use plants in their traditional way or reincorporate their traditional heritage and uses of the land back into their lives.

The reason so many European settlers wanted to settle and claim the lands of the Cherokee was because they saw how vital and plentiful it was as a natural resource. However today Cherokee people live different lives, but their ancestors instilled the Cherokee ways in then by telling stories to make sure they “do the right way” or Tohi. When Cherokee people go to their sacred sites, they can’t help but feel and energy and connection there to their native homelands, such as Clingmans dome is where everything was given them. While some Cherokee people have a connection to the land other feel like they have lost their connection to the land but wish they still had it, while others feel like it has evolved. Cherokee people’s relationship with the land varies because it is a limited connection. Some people were brought up Christian and some still believe in the old ways of the Cherokee, while others believe parts of both and others are learning to about it. There some Cherokees that are going back to their old ways. As younger Cherokee people have gotten older, they have begun to gain an appreciation for the Cherokee ways as they have gotten older. Many Cherokees wish old ways would be here now because it would be a better way of life than what they have now. The Cherokee people have a bittersweet longing for their homelands back, they drive in these mountains and think how beautiful and breathtaking an area is and are let with the thought of “this use to be ours”. Today the Cherokee people are buying back their land one piece at a time. Cherokee see it as a way of getting a piece of their sacred land back, many of the places they buy back are sacred to them and they want to

preserve it not develop it. The Cherokee people have the sense of responsibility to preserve and protect the lands they view as sacred.

# Ferns of the Cherokee



(Picture 1)

(Picture 2)

Common and Scientific Names: *Dennstaedtia punctilobula*, Hay-scented fern (Picture 1), *Thelypteris novaboracensis*, New York fern (Picture 2)

Scientific family: Dennstaedtiaceae – Hay-scented fern, Thelypteridaceae-New York Fern

Cherokee Name: egû'lı uwásgilı́

Cherokee meaning(s): New York ferns gets their name from uwásgilı́ meaning 'soft'.

Theses ferns were known as 'soft' ferns due to the softness of the leaves or fronds, while igû'lı uyela'a means naked and igû'lı dawiskage translates to smooth ferns. Hay-scented ferns can also be known as yân-a utsé'sa, usdíga meaning the bear lies on it or small.

Uses:

Both types of fern are under the same name egû'lı uwásgilı́ or 'soft fern'. These ferns were the most potent remedies for heart troubles; however, other ferns were useful for this condition. Egû'lı uwásgilı́ was a component of a medicine used to treat "the Big Chill" or malarial fevers.

# Plants of the Cherokee



(Picture 3)



(Picture 4)



(Picture 5)

Common Name: Large yellow lady's-slipper (Picture 3), Small yellow lady's-slipper (Picture 4), Pink lady's-slipper (Picture 5)

Scientific Name: *Cypripedium calceolus* var. *pubescens*, *Cypripedium calceolus* var. *parviflorum*, *Cypripedium acaule*

Scientific Family: Orchidaceae

Cherokee Name: k'kwě' ulasúla

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'partridge shoe'

The Cherokee name, K'kwě' ('partridge') Ulasúla ('shoe' or 'moccasin'), has the same basis as the common name lady's-slipper. This is due to the pouch-like sac which looks like a shoe, moccasin, or slipper.

Uses:

It is believed the Cherokee didn't differentiate between the pink and yellow variety or the large and small variety of the yellow. Pink lady slipper roots were boiled into a thick decoction and given to children for worms. Both varieties were collected and sold to white traders. The pink lady slipper was used for stomach cramps when it was combined with a species of *Sanicula*. Lady slipper roots of were made into a tea for nervous conditions, kidney problems or it was combined with *Comandra umbellate*. A tea from these roots could be used for "female problems" such as menstrual irregularities and menopausal changes. Four whole plants were used to create a tea which was said to relieve hernia pain in men and women. A root tea of the large yellow variety had many applications including colds and flu, kidney problems, nervous conditions, high fevers, and stomachaches. All three types of roots could be made into a decoction and drunk for diabetes.



Common Name: Spotted wintergreen

Scientific Name: *Chimaphila maculata*

Scientific Family: Ericaceae

Cherokee Name: ustăstî usdîga

Cherokee Name meaning: 'he spins', 'small'

Uses:

The root of spotted wintergreen was used to make a tea to treat colds, flu, and fever. Wintergreen roots could be beaten, used as a poultice for headaches and other sources of pain, or made into a tea for menstrual pain. Ustastî' ustî leaves pounded and wrapped in a cloth which was then soaked in water to bathe the eyes of patients who had sore eyes and couldn't look at the sun.



Common Name: Yellow-root

Scientific Name: *Xanthorhiza simplicissima*

Scientific Family: Ranunculaceae

Cherokee Name: dalâni amayul̄tehi

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: ‘yellow, water edge growing’

This plant got its name Yellowroot by the intense yellow color that was apparent when the bark is removed from the stem and roots which allowed them to receive the name Dalâni (Dalânige). The next part of yellowroots Cherokee name is Amayul̄tehi which mean ‘water edge growing’, this refers to the preferred habitat of this species which is commonly found growing near mountain streams.

Uses:

Yellowroot produces a bloody juice called Atat’aski which is an important medicine in the Cherokee. Dalâni amayul̄tehi was used as a decoction and was blown on the head, breast, and palm of each hand of a birthing mother. It could be used to cure for when they were urinating blood or diarrhea. The roots were used by steeping them, then holding them in their mouth to cure thrush. Scraped off bark poultice could be used to relieve sore eyes. By chewing on the roots or an infusing, it would alleviate a sore mouth. The roots could also be added to mutton tallow to create a salve. Roots made into a tea would calm nerves or alleviate cramps. If Dalâni amayul̄tehi was combined with *Asarum canadensis*, *Goodyera pubescens*, *Alnus serrulata*, and *Prunus serotina* it was used as a blood tonic and would increase the appetite. However, Yellowroot didn’t just only have medicinal properties but was used as the primary source of yellow dye to color white oak baskets, masks, bows, and other objects. Earlier in the 19th century it was used with black oak bark to color ceremonial feathers to turn them “a most brilliant yellow”.



Common Name: Wild ginger

Scientific Name: *Asarum canadense*

Scientific Family: Aristolochiaceae

Cherokee Name: nuyagûlí'

Meaning of the Cherokee: 'it climbs the rocks'

Wild ginger's Cherokee name comes from nû'ya meaning 'rock' or 'stone' and gûlí' meaning 'it climbs' which is another form of tsilahí or tsílí 'I am climbing', this refers to its ability to grow on moss covered rocks.

Uses:

A hot infusion made out of bruised roots was used for coughs, or the root could be chewed. The roots of nuyagûlí' was also dried for future use. A formula using the leaves were used with *Alnus serrulata*, *Carpinus caroliniana*, and *Sassafras albidum* for old sores and cancers. It was also used for aninedzi ada'nöwoti tuksinigöwayö nategsöi ('their breast, to cure anyone with, terrapin does it to them, as they go about'), aninedzi gotiski ('their breast swells'), and yöwi tsunstia göwani skastane'öi ('when the little people frighten them'). Wild ginger was also used for milky urine. Sores in the abdominal region were treated with roots made into a decoction and blown over the afflicted region with a tube. Nuyagûlí' was an herb sold for commerce to white herb buyers. Roots and *A. canadense* would be made combined into a tea consumed for heart trouble, menstrual irregularity, and colds. A decoction of heartleaf combined with *Goodyera pubescens*, *Alnus serrulata*, *Prunus serotina*, and *Xanthorhiza simplicissima* was used for a blood tonic and to improve the appetite. Dried leaves of wild ginger were also used as snuff, while fresh leaves were used for healing wounds.



Common Name: Jack-in the-pulpit

Scientific Name: *Arisaema triphyllum*

Scientific Family: Araceae

Cherokee Name: túyastí'

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'a boil or carbuncle'

The name "Indian" in Indian turnip was used to mean "counterfeit" or "treacherous" which was similar to terms as "Indian giver" or "Indian summer", meaning the plant was considered poisonous when consumed.

Uses:

However, the roots would be "boiled to remove the strong smart taste, and then mashed with the hands, mixed, or kneaded like dough and then baked or fried like other dough. Jack-in the -pulpit roots were dried along with a small quantity of walnut bark pounded together and placed in the center of a boil (known as tústĩ). Turpentine collected from pine trees and used as ointment along with the pounded herbs, which was covered with cloth or paper until it was healed. Turpentine from pine tree was used as an ointment to heal a wound so it wouldn't leave a scar. Túyastí' roots would be made into a poultice for headaches. Roasting roots for short time and then rolling into small grape sized balls would be eaten. Anywhere from 2, 3, 4, or 7 of the balls would be eaten at a time for kidney problems.



Common Name: Liverleaf

Scientific Name: *Hepatica acutiloba*

Scientific Family: Ranunculaceae

Cherokee Name: skwáľi usdí-ga

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'small liverleaf'

The Cherokee name for liverleaf stems from the word uskwâ'ľi meaning 'stomach'.

Uses:

Roots and leaves were chewed or made into a tea for a person with a cough. Liverleaf leaves or roots would be combined with *Asplenium rhizophyllum* made an emetic or a decoction that was boiled down to ½ its volume for a person who dreamed of snakes. Skwáľi usdí-ga was used for other conditions such as aninedzi ada'nöwoti tuksinigöwayö nategsöi ('their breast, to cure anyone with, terrapin does it to them, as they go about'), aninedzi gotiski ('their breast swells'), and yöwi tsunstia göwani skastane'öi ('when the little people frighten them'). A decoction of could be made and consumed during a new moon to prevent whooping cough. Skwáľi usdí-ga roots were used as hot tea for bowel complaints, while dried leaves could be used for heart troubles. Dried crushed leaves of Liverleaf were made into a tea for toothaches. Liverleaf was also harvested and sold to white traders, due to the demand in the herb market for their leaves.



Common Name: Solomon's seal  
Scientific Name: *Polygonatum biflorum*  
Scientific Family: Asparagaceae  
Cherokee Name: uganásti útana  
Meaning of the Cherokee: 'sweet, large'

Uses:

Solomon's seal is the most important food from this folk genus. Solomon's seal receives its name from the Cherokee word utístügi or utístki meaning 'hanging head' due to the pair of fruits hanging below the arched stalk. The young shoot of Solomon's seal was eaten as greens. The root can be pounded by a corn mortar and added to bread, as a famine food. Uganásti útana roots were roasted and pounded to be applied to boil-like swelling. It could be made into a tea and consumed for stomach problems as well. Solomon's seal roots and *P. biflorum* malong mixed with soil gathered from the front of a ground hog's den, were combined and boiled to make a decoction which was consumed as a medium for emesis to clear "spoiled saliva" due to dreams of the dead. The patient would vomit until all the liquid was expelled; this would be repeated for four straight mornings. Uganásti útana was also used for a purple form of a cancerous condition known as ada'yeeski ('eating itself').



Common Name: May-apple

Scientific Name: *Podophyllum peltatum*

Scientific Family: Berberidaceae

Cherokee Name: uniskwetú'gǐ tsundí-ga

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'they wear a hat, or they have their heads covered, small'

Uses:

May-apple roots were combined with black walnut and butternut bark and made into a strong decoction, which was boiled down four times until it became a thick syrup. Half a teacup full would be consumed at one time as a powerful cathartic. It was thought the patient would recover at once unless a menstruating woman entered the room, and if they did the patient would swell up and die. May-apple was used for unisi'kwaskö ('when they are coughing') and a condition related to dalâni, uniskwothii tsunitlöyö yuwot'isö andanawoski ('when they have a stomach-ache with swollen and throbbing stomach'). Dried powdered roots of Uniskwetú'gǐ tsundí-ga or a tea made from them, served as a laxative. Another common use for the roots were to soak them in whiskey and take them for rheumatism. Pounded roots were also soaked in water, and combined with soaked corn seed, resulting in a tea to keep pests from eating the freshly planted corn. A single drop of juice from the root was placed in the ear to cure deafness. Some people warned others to only use the portion of the root between the nodes, because the nodes themselves were too poisonous. Nodes were specifically used to poison crows and dogs. More conservative Cherokees would avoid the plant all together, believing any vine plant in their garden would wither and die if they tended to their plants after eating the fruit. However, May-apple fruits are edible.



Common Name: Bear-grass

Scientific Name: *Yucca filamentosa*

Scientific Family: Asparagaceae

Cherokee Name: s̄elikw̄'ya

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'green snake'

The leaves of button snakeroot resemble the leaves of the rough green snake, which is how it received its Cherokee name s̄elikw̄'ya.

Uses:

Medical conditions such as amayiutsistano utsya (he is sick by the water'), göwanigistöi ('when they are eaten by them'), (an't'asgiski tskoya – 'insects are breaking out'), useski ('whooping cough'), uwanu'söçiça dalânige ('gonorrhea'), and uyoï ani'ayölöçi ('when they have inhaled bad odors') could be treated with Bear-grass. A decoction would be made and given to children as a preventive measure against whooping cough and other contagious diseases. It was one of the three ingredients in a sacramental drink for the Cherokee version of the Green Corn Ceremony. Roots and leaves of s̄elikw̄'ya were soaked in water and drunk by patients with diabetes. The pounded roots were used for two purposes, washing blankets and as a fish poison, because of the high saponin content in the roots.



Common Name: Cardinal flower  
Scientific Name: *Lobelia cardinalis*  
Scientific Family: Campanulaceae  
Cherokee Name: tsâliyústĭ gĭgagĕĭ  
Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'like tobacco, red'

Uses:

Cardinal flowers were used for *adansiludoĭ yune'istanelö* ('trailing along, if there is pain in different places') or *unestanelidoloçöi* or *uneistaneo gananutotsidoĭ* ('when they have pains all over their body'). Uses for other similar conditions such as *aniskina göwani'tsö istöi* ('when they have been made sick by dead persons'), *aniskina uniyaktanöçi* ('ghosts have changed (the condition of the patient)'), *ayeligogi uniyelö'nöçi* ('they have made it like it'), and *gegane'sagöçi* ('they have it caused by plotters'). *Tsâliyústĭ gĭgagĕĭ* was used for a condition called *gigö yandik'öça* ('urinating blood'). This plant was also used to stop nose bleeds, but it was often combined with *L. siphilitica* to make a cold infusion from the roots and leaves and then snorted up the nose. A decoction from the leaves could be consumed to reduce fevers.



Common Name: Bloodroot

Scientific Name: *Sanguinaria canadensis*

Scientific Family: Papaveraceae

Cherokee Name: gíłı wǎ'ta

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'dog's penis'

The Cherokee meaning of gíłı wǎ'ta comes from the appearance of the plant's roots.

Uses:

Gíłı wǎ'ta roots were pounded to relieve pain from an aching tooth. Blood root was also used as a plant dye for a red dye to masks, bows, baskets and ball sticks. This dye was favored by basket makers to make a "rich, fast color" and was not matched by any other dyes. The best time to collect the roots for dying would be to harvest them in late summer. The plants would have little dye value if gathered in early spring. Gíłı wǎ'ta roots were soaked in cold water to be used as a cough medicine, while the powdered dried root could be used as a snuff for mucus congestion.



Common Name: Large flowered trillium

Scientific Name: *Trillium grandiflorum*

Scientific Family: Melanthiaceae

Cherokee Name: a'yöda gwalogi

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'it thunders (habitually)'

Trilliums Cherokee name references 'thunder and lightning' in reference to the mythical little red men whose conversations from the Darkening land cause the rumble of thunder from the west.

Uses:

Trillium (*T. grandiflorum*) was collected and sold to the herb traders. Roots from all the different varieties were steeped in cold water and consumed for four days for gaktûta. The main symptom of gaktûta was spitting blood. The symbolism of the red-flowered trilliums may indicate they were preferred remedies. A'yöda gwalogi was also used in childbirth to aid in expelling the placenta.



Common Name: White violet

Scientific Name: *Viola striata*

Scientific Family: Violaceae

Cherokee Name: dindáskwatéskĭ unega adsilû'skĭ

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'they pull each other's heads off, white flowered'

Uses:

White violets were also used as part of the remedy for ada'yeki ('eating itself'). Pounded roots could be held against an aching tooth to make the bad tooth fall out. A cold tea could be made out of dindáskwatéskĭ unega adsilû'skĭ to stop vomiting. The roots also contained a blue dye for dying fabrics.



Common Name: Green coneflower  
Scientific Name: *Rudbeckia laciniata*  
Scientific Family: Asteraceae  
Cherokee Name: satsû'nnă

Uses:

Green coneflower has many dialect forms, but the middle dialect form is satsû'nnă. Conservative individuals of the Cherokee who consumed the greens picked early in the spring, parboiled them three to four times and changed the water and then they were cooked in grease. Roots of satsû'nnă were boiled down to make a thick syrup which would be placed in the ear when someone had an earache. This plant was often transplanted into gardens for easy access.



Common Name: Marsh blue violet

Scientific Name: *Viola cucullata*

Scientific Family: Violaceae

Cherokee Name: dindáskwatéskǐ tsundí-ga

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'they pull each other's heads off, small'

Uses:

Marsh blue violet was used to make a poultice from its' pounded roots, leaves, or both to draw a boil to a head. Dindáskwatéskǐ tsundí-ga was another type of violet remedy for cancerous sores known as ada'yéski ('eating itself').



Common Name: Yellow Violet

Scientific Name: *Viola pubescens*

Scientific Family: Violaceae

Cherokee Name: dindáskwatéskī dalânige adsilû'skī

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'they pull each other's heads off, yellow-flowered'

Cherokee reference to tsíswate'skû means 'I am pulling his head off' and dastadaskwtěskû', 'we two are pulling each other's heads off' is because how the flower appears to dangle on the stalk and dalânige adsilû'skī means 'yellow-flowered'.

Uses:

Dindáskwatéskī dalânige adsilû'skī was used as a remedy for a type of cancerous sores known as ada'yeski ('eating itself').



Common Name: Pink smartweed

Scientific Name: *Polygonum pensylvanicum*

Scientific Family: Polygonaceae

Cherokee Name: uhyû'stĩ or uhyû'stĩ unéga adsilû'skĩ

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'bitter', 'white-flowered bitter'

Uses:

Pink smartweed or Uhyû'stĩ as it is known to the Cherokee was considered to be more peppery than bitter. This plant was pounded and placed in pools to poison fish. Uhyû'stĩ was also crushed or cooked up as a liniment for bruises or painful joints, since this plant had a peppery nature it was used to prevent thumb sucking by children.



Common Name: Sedge

Scientific Name: *Carex* spp.

Scientific Family: Cyperaceae

Cherokee Name: ganága tsáinahita

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'it has been licked'

Cherokee considered sedges to be grasses.

Uses:

*Carex* sp. was used for the nightmarish condition inadö danskitsöi ('when they dream of snakes').



Common Name: Yellow wood sorrel

Scientific Name: *Oxalis stricta*

Scientific Family: Oxalidaceae

Cherokee Name: tsuntsâ'y'stĭ útana

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'it is sour, large'

Uses:

Yellow wood sorrel was used for unöłstay'ti tsuniyotc'eça ('when their appetite gets spoiled').



Common Name: Galax

Scientific Name: *Galax aphylla*

Scientific Family: Diapensiaceae

Cherokee Name: nuyagûlí' usdí-ga

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'it climbs the rocks, small'

Galax got its Cherokee name from its ovate/round leaves.

Uses:

A tea could be made out of the roots for kidney problems.



Common Name: Rattle Snake plantain

Scientific Name: *Goodyera pubescens*

Scientific Family: Orchidaceae

Cherokee Name: N/A

Uses:

Rattle Snake plantain was used to strengthen the blood, the formula for this consisted of *P. serotina*, *Xanthorhiza simplicissima*, *Goodyera pubescens*, *Asarum canadensis*, and *Alnus serrulata*. A decoction of *X. simplicissima* combined with *Asarum canadensis*, *Goodyera pubescens*, *Alnus serrulata*, and *Prunus serotina* was used as a blood tonic and to increase the appetite. A decoction of alder, *Goodyera pubescens*, *Xanthorhiza simplicissima*, *Asarum canadense*, and *Prunus serotina* was considered to be a good blood tonic and a decoction of alder alone was used as a general tonic. A tea made from the roots in combination of *A. canadense* was drunk for heart trouble, menstrual irregularity, and colds, while a decoction of heartleaf combined with *Goodyera pubescens*, *Alnus serrulata*, *Prunus serotina*, and *Xanthorhiza simplicissima* was taken as another recipe for a blood tonic and to improve the appetite as well.



Common Name: Wild Strawberry

Scientific Name: *Fragaria virginiana*

Scientific Family: Rosaceae

Cherokee Name: ána

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'strawberry'

Cherokee Story: <https://www.northerncherokeemission.com/the-cherokee-legend-of-the-first-strawberry.html>

Uses:

Ána are the "tame" strawberries, which was one of the first fruits available in addition to corn to make cornbread. Strawberries were seen as being important to maintain marital harmony in Cherokee households through the myth of the origin of strawberries.

# Moss and Lichen of the Cherokee



Common Name: Old man's beard

Scientific Name: *Usnea barbata*

Scientific Family: Parmeliaceae

Cherokee Name: úgalũ-hi atá' ústa

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'moss, it hangs on wood'

Old man's beard received its name úgalũ-hi atá' ústa by atá' which means wood and ústa which is another form of titstaũ' that means 'I am hanging on'.

Uses:

This type of lichen was used to treat thrush.

# Shrubs of the Cherokee



Common Name: Mountain laurel

Scientific Name: *Kalmia latifolia*

Scientific Family: Ericaceae

Cherokee Name: dusúga tsundí-ga

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'small laurel'

Mountain laurel's Cherokee name usdíga means 'small'.

Uses:

The Cherokee would not burn any part of a mountain laurel plant, because they believed burning any part of the plant would destroy the medicinal qualities of the whole species and cause the cold weather to come early. A decoction of mountain laurel, *Rhododendron maximum*, and *Leucothoe axillaris* was created and applied to a scratched area for the relief of involuntary muscular twitching and rheumatism of the knee. While the combination of this plant and *R. maximum*, *L. axillaris*, *Porteranthus trifoliatus*, and *Veratrum viride* were used for all conditions that required pretreatment by scratching. The same combination could be made and combined with *Cassia marilandica* instead of *P. trifoliatus*, to treat heart attacks, which were known as usonuli unt'ane'ö ('sudden attack'). Dusúga tsundí-ga could also be made into a warm infusion with *R. maximum* and *V. viride* and rubbed on an area that had been scratched with the serrated edges of the leaves of *L. axillaris* for the condition unestanelidoloçöi ('when they have pains all over their body'). The medicine man would then follow the pain to different areas, treating each spot each spot until there was no new pain. Mountain laurels could also be used to treat rheumatism, and to prevent cramping in ball players.



Common Name: Great laurel

Scientific Name: *Rhododendron maximum*

Scientific Family: Ericaceae

Cherokee Name: dusúga tsúntana

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'large laurel'

Uses:

The wood was favored by woodworkers for making combs and spoons. Well-seasoned rhododendron wood was used to make, "the finest cooking spoons made anywhere".



Common Name: Elderberry

Scientific Name: *Sambucus canadensis*

Scientific Family: Caprifoliaceae

Cherokee Name: gaksûka útana

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'large gaksûka'

Uses:

Elderberry bark would be scraped from the stems and combined with *Xanthorhiza simplicissima* to be made into a tea which was considered an effective remedy for small white worms that were common in children. Young roots growing from a new sprout of an old root would be made into a hot infusion and consumed for a kidney condition known as *dunatsöwalö ne'öi* ('swellings on both sides'). Elderberry was also used for heartburn along with the biliary condition *dalâni* ('yellow'). *Gaksûka útana* tea was a known remedy for rheumatism, and a decoction made of bark was used for diarrhea ("summer complaint"). The berries were used in jelly and occasionally stewed or cooked into bean bread.



Common Name: Sweet shrub

Scientific Name: *Calycanthus floridus*

Scientific Family: Calycanthaceae

Cherokee Name: kanélskă

Uses:

Cherokee hunters would eat the seeds of kanélskă (sweetshrub) to ward off hunger. Sweetshrub was used for the scrofulous condition duletsi ('kernels'). When it was combined with *Pyrolaria pubera* and the bark was used in an infusion with that of *Xanthorhiza simplicissima* for andkt'egö ('they are under restriction'). It was part of a formula for dalânige tsandik'öça ('yellow urine') and used singly for venereal disease of men and "to drive witches about". Cold tea made out of the bark, could be dipped into the eye from a rag to aid people from going blind from cataracts. This tea would "take white stuff off the eyeball". For children this tea would cure sores and hives on infants.



Common Name: Hydrangea

Scientific Name: *Hydrangea arborescens*

Family Name: Hydrangeaceae

Cherokee Name: ă'ta-tsũ'siwă

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'hollow wood'

Hydrangea received its Cherokee name from ă'ta meaning wood and tsũ'siwă which means empty or hollow which is evident in hydrangea stems having pith instead of a solid core.

Uses:

A cold infusion of roots or bark was consumed to stop vomiting and settle the stomach. ă'ta-tsũ'siwă combined with *Lindera benzoin* for women to use for andkt'egö ('they are under restriction'). Bark made into an infusion was used as an emetic for the biliary condition known as dalâni ('yellow'). Green bark was used to make a cold infusion given to infants and children to alleviate vomiting. The freshly scraped bark was used on burns, swellings or was made into a poultice for sore muscles.



Common Name: Dogbane

Scientific Name: *Apocynum cannabinum*

Scientific Family: Apocynaceae

Cherokee Name: katû'latû útana

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'my leg is broken, large'

Dogbane got its name from katû'lagû which means 'broke my leg', this is cause the inner portion of the stalk can be broken down into short lengths while outer fibers remained intact.

Uses:

Fibers from a dogbane stalk were used to make bow strings. Roots of katû'latû útana was used to make a decoction for kidney problems. The plant could be pounded and used as a poultice for rheumatic pains.



Common Name: Queen-of-the-meadow or Joe-pye-weed

Scientific Name: *Eupatorium maculatum* or *Eupatorium fistulosum*

Scientific Family: Asteraceae

Cherokee Name: amditáĩ útana

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'thing to drink water with, large'

Uses:

Joe-pye-weed was used as a kidney medicine. There was a small and a large variety used by the Cherokee. The large variety was used for unödi tsandik'uça ('they urinate all milk') along with patients who were feverish and thirsty.



Common Name: Dog-hobble

Scientific Name: *Leucothoe axillaris*

Scientific Family: Ericaceae

Cherokee Name: euisúhĩ

Uses:

Euisúhĩ is the proper name for Dog-hobble. Most common use for Dog-hobble was a cold infusion of beaten leaves applied after scratching for rheumatism, hurts, and stings. Euisúhĩ was considered “one of the most important agents in the Cherokee materia medica”. It was also used with the three varieties of dusúga for dinileni dunt’askiye’õi (‘their ears burst’). “Ooze” from the roots was applied to a dog’s skin to cure mange and people would bathe in a decoction of the leaves and stems to cure a the “itch” or scabies. It is extremely toxic “used only in medicine, externally at that, and is noted mostly to prevent stock and children from chewing on it.”



Common Name: Wood nettle

Scientific Name: *Laportea canadensis*

Scientific Family: Urticaceae

Cherokee Name: taléta tsunsi andatsû'skī

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'small, stinging.'

Uses:

Wood nettle is our only native stinging nettle found in the North Carolina mountains, fibers from this plant were used for bowstrings on children's bows. Taléta tsunsi andatsû'skī was harvested immediately after it was killed by frost. Wood nettle was rubbed on patients to relieve an upset stomach after the stinging hairs had been burned off. The entire plant could be pounded into a warm infusion to treat intermittent fevers.



Common Name: Black cohosh  
Scientific Name: *Cimicifuga racemosa*  
Scientific Family: Ranunculaceae  
Cherokee Name: ulidástĩ útana  
Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'it deceives, large'

Uses:

Black cohosh was used by pounding the roots into a warm decoction along with *Cacalia atriplicifolia*, *Ceanothus americana*, and *Polymnia uvedalia* which was drunk for fevers. Ulidástĩ útana was used with *Actaea pachypoda* in a formula for unawasti ('he gets cold' or 'that which chills one'). Another less common use of the roots of black cohosh were to soak them in alcohol, then the extract was used for rheumatism.



Common Name: Doll's eyes

Scientific Name: *Actaea pachypoda*

Scientific Family: Ranunculaceae

Cherokee Name: ulidástī usdí-ga

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'it deceives'

The Cherokee folk generic ulidástī means 'it deceives' which comes from the word tsílidastú' meaning 'I cause him to make a mistake' or 'I am deceiving him'. Doll's eyes was given this name because young plants were confused with ginseng and angelica, which were both highly sought after. Foliage for this plant would turn yellow in the fall, like ginseng which would distract the ginseng hunters.

Uses:

Doll's eye could be used alone to treat dida'nikwutisgi ('rheumatism in the kneecaps'), it was also part of a formula for unawasti ('he gets cold' or that which chills one'). Roots would be made into a decoction that was used for tckoya ('insects cause swelling in body'). People thought ulidástī usdí-ga would destroy young people's teeth if they handled the leaves or roots because the sap would be transferred on their hands, which would eventually get in food and "cause the teeth to rot and crumble away in three to four years. Cherokee people related rheumatism in a person's knees to kidney problems. The treatment for this was to cook and pound Doll's eye with rattlesnake oil, place it in a cloth and the wrap it around the persons knees.



Common Name: Witch-hazel

Scientific Name *Hamamelis virginiana*

Scientific Family: Hamamelidaceae

Cherokee Name: kûnasútlawă

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'tangled up'

Uses:

The green twigs of witch hazel were combined with *Lindera benzoin* to increase a person's appetite, relieve the pains of rheumatism, sore joints, and to reduce fever. A tea could also be made and rubbed into the mouth to relieve soreness. A hot decoction of kûnasútlawă bark combined with the bark of *L. benzoin* and needles from *Pinus virginiana* would be consumed to break a fever. Another usage for the bark was as a hot infusion for colds and as a hot decoction to relieve a sore throat.



Common Name: Strawberry bush, hearts-a-burstin'

Scientific Name: *Euonymus americanus*

Scientific Family: Celastraceae

Cherokee Name: tsuwatúna útana

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'sinews or veins, large'

The Cherokee name for strawberry bush tsuwatúna is the plural form of watúna meaning 'veins' or 'sinews' which was a reference to the green strips of bark from *E. americanus*, once used instead of sinew to attach arrowheads to the shaft.

Uses:

The leaves and seeds of strawberry bush were used to make a tea that served as a wash to eliminate head lice. The leaves alone were used to make a tea that was consumed to alleviate painful menses. Tswatúna útana was combined with seven twigs of *Oxydendron arboreum* for andlköça yunalstuneça ('if their urine is stopped') and as an infusion for young children when they suffer from awini uniyst'osgö ('they are burning inside'). Strawberry bush was also used in formulas for dalânige tsandik'öça ('yellow urine'), ga'yedi ('pain in the back') and digestive problems. For digestion problems it was combined with *Vitis aestivalis* for slimy diarrhea and dalâni ('yellowroot'). Roots of this plant were made into a tea which was consumed in when a patient had a condition of a prolapsed uterus, stomachaches, and gonorrhea. The bark was scraped off and made into a tea. This mixture could also be rubbed on varicose veins ("cramps in the veins").

# Vines of the Cherokee



Common Name: Wild yam

Scientific Name: *Dioscorea villosa*

Scientific Family: Dioscoreaceae

Cherokee Name: anisgína-(ts)unâ'năsû'ta

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'ghosts' terrapin rattles'

The name for wild yam in Cherokee stems from anisgína meaning 'ghosts' and tsunăsû'ta, are the name of the rattles that were worn on the ankles of women in the ceremonial dances.

Uses:

A decoction made from the roots was used as an emetic to remove saliva which had been spoiled by ghosts or used in a similar fashion for dreams about snake or when snake poison was put in food, which caused spoiled the saliva. Wild yams were not dried and stored, because they could be found in winter by their dried tops. Formulas made out of wild yam were used to aid conditions known as göwanigistöi ('when they are eaten by them') and unawasti ('he gets cold' or 'that which chills one'). It could also be used for anisgína-(ts)unâ'năsû'ta, "when a person's guts have come alive' which was a form of gastric distress caused by bloat from overeating. The patient would drink the decoction of the roots made from wild yam, *Carduus altissimus*, *Ilinsonia canadensis*, *Impatiens pallida*, and other unidentified plants.



Common Name: Dutchman's pipe

Scientific Name: *Aristolochia macrophylla*

Scientific Family: Aristolochiaceae

Cherokee Name: udâi

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'it has something hanging to it'

The folk generic in Cherokee udâi refers to the flowers of this plant which hang on a long peduncle, it can also be known as udâi útana meaning 'it has something hanging to it.

Uses:

It was described udâi as having a vine with cucumber-like fruit. Dutchman's pipe would be used if a person suffered from bad dreams, and it was also part of a formula for dalânige tsandik'öça ('yellow urine').



Common Name: Summer grape

Scientific Name: *Vitis aestivalis*

Scientific Family: Vitaceae

Cherokee Name: telû'latī

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'it has them hanging down'

The Cherokee folk generic telû'latī means 'it has them hanging down', which refers to the hanging clusters of fruit that are suspended from the vine.

Uses:

Summer grape was used in formulas for adayuni't'i'lö ('pierced by wood'), aniskina uniyaktanöçi ('ghosts have changed (the condition of the patient)'), and dalânige tsandik'öça ('yellow urine'). It could also be combined with *Diospyros virginiana* for duni'alagöi ata'yesgi ('inflamed palate') and with *Ilex verticillata* for undölaksöçi ('broken bones'). Telû'latī could be used alone for unölstay'ti tsuniyotc'eça ('when their appetite gets spoiled'). Summer grape was also used in combination with *Vitis lambrusca* and *Rubus ideaus* for stopped urination and for cases of chronic diarrhea. It was also combined with *Vitis vulpina*, *Nyssa sylvatica*, *Cornus florida*, *Amelanchier canadensis*, and *Tradescantia subaspera*. included *V. aestivalis* in a formula for "bad disease", a condition associated with a high fever.

# Trees of the Cherokee



Common Name: Devil's walking stick

Scientific Name: *Aralia spinosa*

Scientific Family: Araliaceae

Cherokee Name: ultsǎ'gǐtǎ' útana

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'it cuts its top off, large'

The Cherokee folk generic ultsǎ'gǐtǎ' means 'it cuts its top off' was a reference to the deciduous nature of the branches which were actually compound leaves. The leaves or branches would drop off every year.

Uses:

Older roots were roasted and used as an emetic, while the younger green roots were thought to be poisonous. Another use for the roots of ultsǎ'gǐtǎ' útana was to make them into a salve for healing old sores. The wood of Devil's walking stick would be burned and then blown on scratched area to treat paralysis on half of the body.



Common Name(s): Black birch, Sweet birch, Cherry birch, or Yellow birch

Scientific Name(s): *Betula lenta* or *Betula lutea*

Scientific Family: Betulaceae

Cherokee Name: atsû'kĩ gûnage or atisöyi uyalemö

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'black smelling wood', 'smelling wood with rough bark'

The word uyalemö translates as 'rough bark'. *Betula* the Latin genus name is translated to atsû'kĩ, stemming from ä'tä which means wood' and sũ'kĩ' which means 'smelling'.

Uses:

The Cherokee used many different kinds of birch, the most common type of birch in higher elevations is yellow birch. Yellow birch had a cultural use, when a novice was a candidate was becoming a medicine man, it was required of him to avoid any food prepared by menstruating women or touch any object she had touched. It was believed if this occurred, he would forget all learned and be spoiled as a candidate. As a preventive measure to this, the beginning medicine man would chew the inner bark of atsû'kĩ gûnage and rub the juice over his heart area, or the "place where the soul is". An infusion of the bark was also used alone in a ritual monthly emesis, it was said to have a pleasant taste which probably eased the process and settled the stomach.



Common Name: Wild cherry

Scientific Name: *Prunus serotina*, *Prunus virginiana*

Scientific Family: Roseaceae

Cherokee Name: ta'ya or gita'hya

#### Uses:

Wild cherry bark was known as the main treatment for intermittent fevers or unawasti egwa ('big chill'). Bark could also be beaten and placed in water with seven coals to heat the decoction and then be blown on the body of the patient. Another formula containing wild cherry was for unawasti egwa as well as for unak'ewagöi ('if they lost their voice') and gotisgi tsunitsöyöi ('when their stomach is swollen'). The bark could also be used for a described as "when heat caused it", which was swollen testicles. A combination of wild cherry bark *Alnus serrulata* and another unidentified plant was used for a form of diarrhea. Ta'ya bark was used for all symptoms associated with colds, flu, and other conditions. A decoction made from the bark would be cooked down until it was thick and was taken for coughs or combined with *Clethra acuminata* to break a high fever. Rashes from measles appearing on the skin's surface would be treated by mixing wild cherry bark along with *Lindera benzoin* and *Cornus florida* into a decoction and added to corn whiskey. The bark was also used in a decoction to break up congestion. A tonic formula could be used to strengthen the blood, consisted of *P. serotina*, *Xanthorhiza simplicissima*, *Goodyera pubescens*, *Asarum canadensis*, and *Alnus serrulata*. This combination was made into a decoction and several swallows would be consumed before meals to improve their appetite.



Common Name: Tulip poplar  
Scientific Name: *Liriodendron tulipifera*  
Scientific Family: Magnoliaceae  
Cherokee Name: tsiyu

Uses:

Cherokee held a high regard for the healing properties of the Tulip poplar. Spinning wheels were made of tulip poplar. Tsiyu bark was used in most “chirurgical” treatments concerning bruises, cuts, arrows and bullet wounds. Each of these were treated with an infusion of poplar-bark, the sovereign remedy formula known as adayuni’t’i’lö (‘pierced by wood’). Tulip poplar was used for gotisgi tsunitsöyöi (‘when their stomach is swollen’) and was an acceptable substitute for *Aristolochia serpentaria* for itchy genitals due to urinating on the fire. A decoction made of the bark or root could be used as a substitute for *Botrychium virginianum* for a remedy for a venomous snakebite, the decoction would be blown over the patient and rubbed on the bite. A decoction of the bark would also be blown over fractured bones. Tulip poplar bark would be part of a formula that aids a urinary condition known as e’isti andik’ö’öi (no gloss), another decoction of the bark would be made and consumed for bowel trouble. Tsiyu bark would also aid in decreasing the swelling of the neck. Roots and bark were made into an infusion and drunk for indigestion. Inner bark of tulip poplar trees were scraped off and oven dried and handed out in small quantities where eaten for pinworms. Tulip poplar bark was also part of the combination that aided in treating tuberculosis, the bark was added to homemade medicines to act as a preservative.



Common Name: Basswood

Scientific Name: *Tilia heterophylla* or *Tilia americana*

Scientific Family: Tiliaceae

Cherokee Name: idehû' or itea

#### Uses:

Basswood could be used for diarrhea attributed to animals, known as at'awini e'i or 'the forest dwellers. The bark from a lightning struck Basswood tree would be collected and chewed to allow the juices of the bark to be rubbed on a snakebite. Another use for the bark was to beat it and use it as a poultice for boils along with being a component in a decoction for tuberculosis. Women would drink a decoction made from the bark as soon as they found out they were pregnant; they would do this every month until the child was delivered. This was performed every month because the bark is slippery, like that of slippery elm (dâwâtsíla), which aided in the birthing process.



Common Name: Flowering dogwood

Scientific Name: *Cornus florida*

Scientific Family: Cornaceae

Cherokee Name: kănûsî'tă

#### Uses:

The inner bark of flowering dogwood was a “noted medicine” and was boiled for dysentery. Flowering dogwood was for dermatological conditions. A decoction made of dogwood and black oak barks (*Quercus velutina*) was drunk for sore throats. When flowering dogwood bark was collected it was always harvested from the east side of the tree. Kănûsî'tă part of the formula for the form of cancer known as ada'yeski ('eating itself'), unawasti egwa ('big chill'), unak'ewagöi ('if they lost their voice'), and unegö tsandiköça ('if they water out white'). This tree was included in a formula for severe diarrhea or used alone for chicken pox or any condition that produced boils on the skin. Another use for the bark was for it to be chewed and spat on spider bites, it could also be chewed for headaches. A decoction was made from the bark as a remedy for poison ivy, part after the decoction is consumed while the other part was sprinkled on the rash if not it was believed that the rash will be driven into the body. A tea treated the measles could be made by Flowering dogwood alone or into a decocted combination with *Prunus serotina* and *Lindera benzoin*. The flower petals could be boiled and consumed for colds.



Common Name: Sassafras

Scientific Name: *Sassafras albidum*

Scientific Family: Lauraceae

Cherokee Name: kûnstû'tsǐ

#### Uses:

Sassafras is known as kûnstû'tsǐ in Cherokee. The leaves and bark of sassafras were chewed, and the juice spat on spider bites. A tea could also be brewed from the roots for all types of diarrhea and a remedy for scrofula. Sassafras was combined with *Pinus pungens* and *Bovista pila* for the purple form of the cancer known as ada'yeski. It was also used for a condition known as "when they are shaking with fever", possibly a form of unawasti egwa ('big chill'). The sassafras barks were used in combination with *Carpinus caroliniana*, and *Alnus serrulata* with the leaf of *Hexastylis arifolia* for other cancers and old sores. Roots of this tree were consumed as a blood builder, for headaches and colds, as a poultice for sprains and bruises, and as a favored beverage. The young twig piths were made into a cold eyewash for any variety of sore eyes, including conditions such as sties or pink eye. There was also another beverage made from the roots that would be chewed to dispel the personal odor that from eating ramps. There are two varieties of sassafras roots, but the red roots were superior to the white roots.



Common Name: Buckeye

Scientific Name: *Aesculus octandra* or *Aesculua flava*

Scientific Family: Hippocastanaceae

Cherokee Name: úniskwûtû'

Meaning of Cherokee Name: 'they have a head'

#### Uses:

Buckeye was part a formula for unitseno'ise'oi ('when a person has stomach trouble') along a variety of problems associated with the urinary tract such as having a whitish discharge in the urine, unegö tsandiköça ('if they water out white') and unegö unanugots'eça ('it is coming out white'). Úniskwûtû' was also a component in a formula for dalânige tsandik'öça ('yellow urine'). Buckeye bark was steeped and used in small quantities by midwives to aid with postpartum cramping, but too much was considered a dangerous. Nuts from the buckeye were pounded and used as a poultice. The bark was also used to poison fish. However, the nuts appeared to be the most medicinal part of a Buckeye. Meat of Buckeye nuts were used as a salve to heal sores (much like the poultice activity above) and by carrying a nut on your person it would will help cure piles. Small pieces of the nut were chewed, and the juice was swallowed for colic. If a person was felt queer, weak or going to have a seizure, the nuts were ground and steeped in warm water and made into an infusion which was drunk by the person. Buckeye was also used as a birthing plant. The bark was made into a tea to aid in delivery, while a tea made from Buckeye and *Castanea dentata* would be given in small portions to ease postpartum cramping and bleeding.



Common Name: Red maple

Scientific Name: *Acer rubrum*

Scientific Family: Aceraceae

Cherokee Name: tsûnwagi gigage adsilû'skî

Meaning of Cherokee Name: 'maple with red flowers'

Red maple was known as 'plant with red flowers', but tsûnwagi is the common Cherokee term for maple.

Uses:

Red maple was combined with *Diospyros virginiana* to treat the type of cancer known as ada'yeski ('eating itself') along with du'alagosa ('inflammation of the palate'). When tsûnwagi gigage adsilû'skî was combined with *Quercus velutina* for wounds caused by arrows, bullets and axe cuts. A decoction made from the bark of red maple was used for dysentery and hives. When the decoction was combined with *Quercus alba*, *Q. nigra*, and *Castanea dentata* it was for menstrual irregularities. Boiled steam from the bark was to help with blindness. The inner bark was boiled to a syrup and made into pills and dissolved in water when a person had sore eyes.



Common Name: White oak

Scientific Name: *Quercus alba*

Scientific Family: Fagaceae

Cherokee Name: tǎ'ľu' or t'ala

Uses:

The White oak was an important component of Cherokee life. White acorns were the favored acorn to make acorn bread (gulé gátü). Inner bark of White oak trees were used to make baskets. Tǎ'ľu' acorns would also be coarsely crushed in a mortar the thoroughly parched, pulverixed and boiled as a coffee substitute. White oaks were used in formulas for at'awini e'I (the forest dwellers), dalânige tsandik'öça (yellow urine), e'isti, ik'ö'öi (painful urination), and another condition that consisted of sores that burst, possibly yigöwaninilöösiki ('when they have suint').



Common Name: Persimmon  
Scientific Name: *Diospyros virginiana*  
Scientific Family: Ebenaceae  
Cherokee Name: salí'

Uses:

Persimmon was a remedy for bloody flux and part of a multi-bark decoction given for uyalot'isga ('if there is swelling'). A stamper made of persimmon wood was used to massage patients suffering from rheumatic pains. It was also popular remedy for conditions including ada'yeski ('eating itself'), duni'alagöi ata'yesgi ('inflamed palate'), inflammation of the urinary tract known as e'isti andik'ö'öi (no gloss), and gançawadööski ('blisters caused by heat'). When persimmon bark was combined with the bark of *Alnus serrulata*, *Juglans cinerea*, and *Prunus serotina* as a cold infusion used for toothaches. Bark alone was used to relieve heartburn. Tea could be made out of salí' bark which required the patient to hold the tea in their mouth causing the infection to stop. Fruit from selected persimmon trees were eaten fresh, while other persimmon trees had their fruit stored for later. When eating the fruit, the seeds were removed and the fruit was pounded into a pulp using a mortar, where it was then formed into flattened cakes and dried in the sun on drying racks.



Common Name: Beech

Scientific Name: *Fagus grandifolia* or *Fagus americana*

Scientific Family: Fagaceae

Cherokee Name: kutlû' or kusû'

Uses:

Kutlû' or beech tree bark was made into an infusion and consumed. Sassafras was combined with *Castanea dentata*, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, and unidentified species of *Quercus* and *Tilia* was used for tuberculosis. Another formula Beech was used for was "bad disease" this condition typically involved a high fever. Another version of an infusion for tuberculosis consisted of a combination of bark from *F. grandifolia*, *P. occidentalis*, *Vitis aestivalis*, *Smilax glauca*, *Euonymus americanus*, *Liquidambar styraciflua*, and *Nyssa sylvatica*.



Common Name: Cucumber tree

Scientific Name: *Magnolia acuminata*

Family Name: Magnoliaceae

Cherokee Name: tsuhyûnsti (ãã)

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'bitter (wood)'

Cucumber tree or tsuhyûnsti received its name from tsuyösti meaning 'they are bitter' which is another version of tsuhyûnsti.

Uses:

Cucumber tree was used in a formula for uyalot'isga ('if there is swelling'), it was used with *Castanea pumila* for dunitsalöi ('when they have blisters'), and as part of a formula for e'isti andik'ö'öi (no gloss). When tsuhyûnsti used alone was either chewed or steeped into a tea which was kept in contact with a sore tooth. Leaves of tsuhyûnsti were combined with leaves of *Ostrya virginiana* and made into a decoction for a toothache. The bark of Cucumber plant was made into a tea to relieve cramps in infants, ease belching and stomach aches, and was part of a formula for bloody flux.



Common Name: American holly

Scientific Name: *Ilex opaca*

Scientific Family Name: Aquifoliaceae

Cherokee Name: ústǎstǐ

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'he spins'

American holly gets its' Cherokee name from dístǎstǐ meaning whorled or spinning, due to the appearance of the leaves.

Uses:

The leaves were used to scratch muscles sore with cramps.



Common Name: Eastern hemlock

Scientific Name: *Tsuga canadensis*

Scientific Family: Pinaceae

Cherokee Name: atsū'nki unega

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'white smelling wood'

Atsū'nki unega or Eastern Hemlock is known to be quite fragrant and has wood that is very light in color.

Uses:

The branch tips of this tree were turned into a tea for kidney troubles. Bark from the Eastern hemlock can be pounded and used for a poultice for itchy armpits.



Crab-apple

Hawthorn

Common Name: Hawthorne or Crab-apple

Scientific Name: *Crataegus coccinea* or *Malus coronaria*

Scientific Family: Roseaceae

Cherokee Name: sũnktă' ínăgeaně'hĩ

Meaning of the Cherokee Name: 'wilderness dwelling apple'

The Cherokee name for this plant originates from sũnktă' or 'apple', ínăge or 'a wilderness', and aně'hĩ means 'dwelling' or 'growing'.

Uses:

Crab-apple was used in a cancer remedy and an infusion of the bark and fruit of along with *M. coronaria* was drunk by ball players.