KALAMAZOO NATURE CENTER FORAGING POLICY

The Kalamazoo Nature Center (KNC) is a nonprofit organization located in Kalamazoo, Michigan whose mission is to create relationships & experiences that welcome and inspire people to discover, enjoy, value, and care for nature. KNC envisions a resilient community where all people have strong interconnections with the natural world. One important and increasingly popular way that many people connect with nature is through foraging. As with many outdoor activities, foraging comes with inherent risks.

Visitors are permitted to forage edible fruits, nuts, invasive plants, or other approved species on a limited basis for personal consumption following KNC's Foraging Policy.

Visitors choosing to forage at KNC do so at their own risk; the Kalamazoo Nature Center and its staff bear no responsibility or liability for adverse outcomes from foraging, even when done as part of a directed program.

KNC offers the following foraging guidance in an effort to foster a safer experience that protects visitors and participants, as well as the ecological health of the natural resources in our care.

REQUIREMENTS

- KNC-provided maps, staff guidance, associated on-site signage, and social media alerts will provide specific directions to visitors about approved foraging species, locations, and timeframes. Foraging is *only* permitted following this guidance.
- Foragers must be confident in their field identification skills prior to consuming any foraged materials.
- When harvesting any invasive species, the gatherer must be able to properly identify the species before harvesting and prevent its further spread during harvest.
- Foraging efforts are only allowed in approved areas along established trails. At times, KNC may offer seasonal promotions to encourage foraging of key species (such as garlic mustard, goldenrod, or blackberries) in certain areas off-trail.
- KNC-offered foraging programs may offer participants more information about wild edibles, but are not a guarantee of safety, as every person's experience and health may vary. Foraging program participants may be asked and required to sign additional liability waivers prior to participation.

RESTRICTIONS

- Do not harvest what you cannot identify.
- Visitors may not go off-trail into sensitive habitats, unless specifically directed by KNC staff. No parking is permitted outside of established KNC parking areas.
- No uprooting, pulling, or digging of vegetation is allowed, with the exception of invasive plants not native to Michigan. Foraging for invasive species is allowable so long as care is taken to not disturb local flora and not to further spread the invasive in question. To learn more about species documented as invasive to Michigan or the Midwest region and best practices for preventing their spread, please see: michigan.gov/invasives/id-report/plants or misin.msu.edu.
- Species considered rare or listed as special concern, threatened, or endangered are not permitted to be foraged or collected, except when explicitly authorized by KNC for partnership, education, conservation or research purposes.
- Hunting or removal of any animal (including fish, reptiles, invertebrates/insects, amphibians, birds, and/or mammals) is prohibited except when explicitly authorized by KNC for partnership, education, conservation or research purposes. Catch-and-release netting of insects is allowed, provided the insect is handled with care and promptly released within the same habitat.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Be mindful that by foraging you are joining a natural community shared by many species. Be respectful of other people and the many other organisms that live in this environment. Pick only what is in abundance, take only what you need, and leave most to share with other wildlife. Find ways to give back to the habitat in return and leave it better than you found it. Seek to understand the life of what you harvest and how you can be part of interconnected dance of the community you have joined. Be careful of where you step and what parts you gather. Be intentional of the legacy you leave and useful to the community you've joined.

Know the ways of the ones who take care of you, so that you may take care of them. Introduce yourself. Be accountable as the one who comes asking for life. Ask permission before taking. Abide by the answer. Never take the first. Never take the last. Take only what you need. Take only that which is given. Never take more than half. Leave some for others. Harvest in a way that minimizes harm. Use it respectfully. Never waste what you have taken. Share. Give thanks for what you have been given. Give a gift, in reciprocity for what you have taken. Sustain the ones who sustain you and the earth will last forever.

— Robin Wall Kimmerer,
Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants

The Kalamazoo Nature Center recognizes historical injustices and is committed to healing relationships between land and people in our work. Learn more: naturecenter.org/visit/about-knc/equity