Wabanaki ethnobotany: Food and Medicine

A year-long course at the Center for Integrative Herbalism, Montpelier, VT. 6:00-9:00 PM; one Monday a month, February through November, 2016. $156 (classes can be taken individually at $17 per class).

Call 802-224-7100 for more information or to register.

Introduction

This course of study is designed to acquaint the student with historic and contemporary herbal medicines and foods of the Vermont/New Hampshire Abenakis and their Wabanaki neighbors. Using the academic discipline of Ethnobotany, counterbalanced with a Native American perspective, we will explore many facets of the relation of our region's Indigenous communities to their plant world. We will use lecture/slide-show experiences, demonstrations, music, performance and video to consider the nuts and bolts of Indigenous agriculture and wild plant use, but also focus on the cultural, ceremonial and spiritual issues involved with Indigenous foods and healing.

Such a course as this cannot be taught simply as an academic or intellectual exercise. The legacy of the continual transfer of Indigenous lands, resources, children, material goods, crops and ideas through 18th century conquest, early 20th century genocide and late 20th century appropriation of intellectual property, demands an Indigenous perspective and a balance.

There are no prerequisites for the course other than an interest in Indigenous peoples, the relation of people to the plant world. Students who take the course as a year-long Center for Integrative Herbalism certificate program will, in addition to attendance, be expected to keep a journal, show mastery of the lecture material and outside readings, and complete a final ethnobotanical project to be chosen in conjunction with the instructor. The final project, which forms a considerable portion of the final evaluation; must "give back" to regional Indigenous communities in a concrete way, such as assistance with tribal gardens, forests, or programming that is aligned to the material in the course.

Note: each monthly class can also be attended individually for personal interest and enlightenment.

The Instructor, Dr. Frederick M. Wiseman was trained as a paleo-ethnobotanist at the University of Arizona. He taught and did research at Louisiana State, MIT's Center for Materials Research in Archaeology and Ethnology, and Johnson State College in Vermont, where he retired as Department Chair in 2014. He has published extensively on tropical fieldwork in Belize, Honduras, Yucatan and arid-lands research in Arizona and Sonora Mexico. Over the last twenty years he has focused on the culture and ecology of the Wabanaki people of northern New England, Quebec and the Canadian Maritimes, completing books and films, scholarly and popular articles and presented papers on Wabanaki culture & ecology.

SYLLABUS

Introduction to Indigenous ethnobotany
2/22/2016
The first program in the series introduces the discipline of Ethnobotany and its relation to the mission of the Center for Integrative Herbalism, including Ethnobotany’s intellectual focus, history, methodologies and techniques. It then considers modern cross-cultural issues such as Indigenous intellectual rights, proper tribal consultation, the ethics involved with publication and decolonization/sovereignty issues. We then introduce the main regional focus of the course: the peoples and ecology of the Wabanaki area of Maine New Hampshire and Vermont and adjacent Canada.

The Abenaki Seed Catalog 3/7/2016

Early spring is an exciting time; when we await our seed catalogues to see what new crops, medicinals and ornamentals are available. Now there is an opportunity to explore and select seed that is fundamentally local, and thus provides us on many levels, an unsurpassed source for food as medicine. Join Dr. Fred Wiseman as he goes over this comprehensive seed catalog, including stories of chasing down the seeds, how they turned out in cultivation, their taste and nutrition and tips on how to properly grow them together. As a handout -- a listing of 2015/16 seed suppliers that can provide many seeds identical or very similar to those raised by the Indigenous partners of the Seeds of Renewal Project.

*Demonstration:* The Indigenous seeds that make up the catalog.

Field-making Season: Designing the Abenaki garden 4/25/2016

Mid spring is the time for opening or expanding your gardens, medicine plots and fields. Learn how the Wabanaki people of Vermont and New Hampshire developed and practiced a simple and elegant horticultural system based upon a suite of well-adapted herbaceous crops. These were and are planted carefully in sustainably fertilized mound and ridged field “geo-intensive” systems that intimately interact with soils and hydrology, as well as the social and family structure of the Wabanaki community. Learn how to create these fields and crop mixes that support and enhance each other -- to produce larger crops of more nutritious foods. Dr Wiseman will explore the role of minor agricultural ritual such as anchoring and singing the crops to germination, growth and ripeness.

*Demonstration:* Examples of archaeological and historic land-clearing and field preparation tools.

*Performance:* The Wabanaki Calling-in/four directions protocol.

Sun Dance Season: An Introduction to Indigenous North American healing; botanical materials and world view. 5/9/2016

Using his extensive experience with healers and gardeners in Guatemala, Belize, Northern Mexico, the American Southwest, Louisiana and the Northeast, Prof. Fred Wiseman will discuss the basics of ethnobotanical (and allied) Native healing arts; from the doctrine of animism and metaconnection; to syncretic Roman Catholic/Native healing. He will also give methodological insight into the treatment of crop plants as well as wild-collected plants as relatives or allies in the pursuit of health, and the
idea of place-based healing using the botanical and geomorphic strength/power inherent in specific areas such as cornfields or the "monte."

**Demonstration:** Examples of the healing tools from the Wabanaki area and Yaqui/Mayo region of Sonora, Mexico.

**Performance:** Storytelling about the Sierra Madre I

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**Shooting Fire Season: Wabanaki Ethnobotany and Spirituality**

6/26/2016

The Solstice is the time of the Shooting Fire, a mix of ancient Wabanaki belief in messaging the Giver of Life, infused with 17th century French politics and mysticism. The Wabanaki Peoples, which include the Abenakis, Penobscots, Passamaquoddi, Maliseets and Micmaqs, consider personal and community well-being intimately tied together. Prof. Frederick Wiseman will share Indigenous stories, songs, foods and medicines as insights into health and wellbeing. He will discuss the three types of medicine people. Agricultural Ritual (one facet of which is the Shooting Fire) not only reminds people of the passage of the agricultural clock, but also informs and structures the types and availability of healing and wellbeing options available, as well as the role of ceremony.

**Demonstration:** The healing stories and their material accoutrements

**Video:** "The Sun Dance,""The Rain Dance."

**Performance:** Storytelling about the Sierra Madre II

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**The Wabanaki Agroforest**

7/25/2016

Much of Vermont's Northern Hardwood Forest has been converted into specially selected stands of trees that maximize the fuelwood, timber, aesthetic/recreational use, or maple sap collection. This conversion seems to have deep local roots. Professor Fred Wiseman developed the concept of a "Northern" permacultural system. This workshop will focus on the types of edible/ medicinal trees (plums, etc.), shrubs (hazelnuts, etc.), subshrubs (sweetfern, etc.), vines (grapes, etc.) and herbaceous perennials (Jerusalem artichokes, etc.) and herbs (white sage, etc.) organized by canopy stratum by light, water and nutrient requirements -- to optimize production.

**Demonstration:** Examples of forest products.

**Green Corn Season: The role of story, community well being.**

9/26/2016

The most important ceremony of the Calendar is the Green Corn Ceremony. Studies into the origins of the half-forgotten legends of the Abenaki controversial Corn Song. He will then Ceremony by the Abenaki Koasek Tribe area. It includes learning the music, accouterments and practicing the

**Demonstration:** Examples of forest products.

**Abenaki Horticultural/Ritual**

Join Prof. Wiseman as he shares his ceremony that seem embedded in Creation Time, and encoded in the discuss the revival of the Green Corn in the Newbury VT/Haverhill, NH making the regalia and ceremonial choreography and oratory.
However, the Green Corn Feast, and its taboos and protocols as well as its socio-nutritional characteristics are the "food as medicine" focus of the day's activities. Lastly he will share music and videos of the Green Corn Ceremony as it is up and running today and how it contributes to community healing and well-being.

*Demonstration: Examples of Harvest crops*
*Video/music: The Wabanaki Green Corn Ceremony.*

Harvest Season and Orthorexia nervosa: The Ethnobotany of Indigenous foodways/cuisine in eating and medicating one's identity
10/24/2016
Ethnobotanists have studied the culture and environmental psychology that lies behind food (and medicine) choice. These researches had led to the development of some important theory regarding how, when, where and why we eat -- of which nutrition forms but a small component! Prof. Wiseman will look at Indigenous food choice/cuisine and what we may consider drugs from a scientific "optimization" perspective as well as an Indigenous community-based perspective. Using examples from modern Anglo-American life, as well as Southwestern and Wabanaki cuisine and food service, he will explain the unstated rules for eating and how that reinforces individual, family and community identity.

*Demonstration: Examples of Indigenous Wabanaki crops widely available in Vermont stores.*

Decolonizing Thanksgiving: The politics of Native foods and medicine
11/21/2016
November, is designated "Native American Month" by various presidents, but never seems to "stick" in the consciousness as does "Black History Month" or "Woman's History Month." Native advocates have tried for years, but without much success, to turn Columbus Day and Thanksgiving into opportunities for opening a serious dialogue on Native history and culture. Using the "Decolonizing Thanksgiving" movement as a rubric to understand Native concerns about decolonized diet, food sovereignty, food justice and food security, Prof. Wiseman will show how food is a quintessential political statement, and how it should be treated by both Native and Non-natives alike, especially in the fall.

*Demonstration: Examples of Indigenous Wabanaki beverages and condiments widely available in Vermont stores.*