

Library presents "Edible and Medicinal Plants"

Written by Stacy Taff

Tuesday, April 23, 2013 7:52 AM - Last Updated Tuesday, April 23, 2013 8:52 AM



DELPHOS — When you find yourself stranded in the wild, knowing the difference between a nutritious wild plant and a poisonous one, could potentially save your life.

Patrons of the Delphos Public Library were treated to a presentation Monday night by Johnny Appleseed Metro Parks Naturalist Mark Mohr, who shared his knowledge on which plants are safe to ingest and those it would be wiser to avoid.

"What you have to realize is that you can have every good intention when searching for edible or medicinal plants but if you're not careful, you could end up in the graveyard," he began. "For instance the Mayapple, the ripe fruit can be used for jams, jellies and even Mayapple wine but the Shawnee Indians knew how many of the roots they needed to dig up to commit suicide.

"Another plant you should stay away from is the pretty white flower, Dutchman's Breeches. They're highly poisonous. On the other hand, Wild Geraniums are edible and this spring, Kendrick Woods will be purple with them. The Indians used to put the powdered, dried roots into wounds to stop the bleeding. It was also said that you can brew a tea from them that cures Dysentery. "

Mohr gave his audience a long list of edibles and ways to cook and prepare them. Some can be found growing in the average lawn like violets, while others you'd have to trek through woods or near water to find, like cattails. Mushrooms that are generally considered safe are puff ball and morrell. Other plants include wild leeks, wild asparagus, burdock root, rosehips, blackberries, raspberries, wild ginger, thistles, red clover, dandelions, chickweed and wild grapes.

Mohr says a good rule of thumb to follow is "leaves of three, leave it be," unless it's a wild strawberry.

Mohr also shared a few tidbits on medicinal plants, some of which are still used today.

"The inner bark of the Slippery Elm is actually still an ingredient in a lot of different sore throat lozenges. Also, garlic is an antibiotic. It can cure a cold if you eat enough of it. When I feel a cold coming on, I mix some garlic into my scrambled eggs and it works for me," he said.

"Another medicinal plant, the Pawpaw tree, is very similar to the South American Graviola Tree, which they've been using to make a tea from for centuries that shrinks tumors. Scientists have been trying to duplicate it in a lab and since they can't, they don't want to use it because it can't be patented. The herbalist we talked to said it's most potent when you collect the young roots

Library presents "Edible and Medicinal Plants"

Written by Stacy Taff

Tuesday, April 23, 2013 7:52 AM - Last Updated Tuesday, April 23, 2013 8:52 AM

and bark in the spring."

While some plants can have healing properties, Mohr advised his audience not to expect miraculous results and to do research before trusting any wild plant.

"Like most things, not all of these medicinal plants will work for everyone," he said. "You really want to do your homework before you make a meal out of the woods. Some like the Mayapple and Dutchman's Breeches can be deadly, but others are safe and full of vitamins."__PUBLIC__