



Ethno-botanical Garden Self-Guided Tour

Our lives depend on the environment in which we live. Each of us is affected by nature's rhythm whether it's the availability of seasonal foods, changes in outdoor recreation, or the clothes we wear. For the Ojibwe Indians, each season brought different plants used for food, medicine, ceremonies, and raw materials.



This garden, a restored native landscape, shares the history of local Ojibwe Indians and the plants on which they relied. It also reminds us of the significance native plants have in our daily lives.

A Garden for All Seasons

The garden is open year-round, allowing visitors to experience the native plants unique to each season in Voyageurs National Park.

Spring breathes new life into the garden as serviceberry and pin cherry blossoms awaken to warmer days.

The heat of summer brings a rainbow of colors. From fragrant sweet fern to tasty raspberries and blueberries, this season is sure to awaken your senses.

As autumn arrives, golden yellow birch and aspen, mixed with reddish brown oak, and vibrant red maples, produce a spectacular viewing experience.

At winter's peak, snow covered pines, firs, and cedars provide excellent shelter for wildlife, as hardy shrubs of red-osier dogwood surface through a blanket of snow.



Accessible Pathway

You may begin your journey at either entrance. Plant markers are scattered throughout the garden displaying the common name, Ojibwe Indian name, and traditional use of each plant.

Paper Birch
Wapamun
(wag-pum-un)



As the glaciers retreated some 10,000 years ago, so began the return of plant life to this region. Small ground plants eventually gave way to taller shrubs and trees, creating the diverse landscape you witness today.



This site has not always retained its natural beauty. In the 1990s, during dredging for the boat basin, invasive reed canary grass was transported to this location. Due to this plant's prolific roots and early growing

season, reed canary grass stole resources from vulnerable native plants, transforming this once bountiful site into a barren field.

Lower Bench

Today, with the help of park staff, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and volunteers, invasive plants have been replaced with native plants. Many of the garden plants, such as wild rose, grew from native seeds collected throughout the park and grown in the park's greenhouse. Although humans began the restoration process, nature will continue altering the garden.



For a complete list of plants found in the garden, please inquire at the visitor center.



Ojibwe Indian Camp

Ojibwe Indians have an intimate relationship with Mother Nature, traveling at her pace, season to season, year after year, taking advantage of available resources. The camp takes you back to a time when meals were cooked over an open fire and survival depended on what Mother Earth provided.



Freshly picked herbs were hung to dry on the drying rack along with fish, venison, and hides. Fish nets were also stretched, dried, and repaired on similar racks.



The lodge was often referred to as a waaginogaan (wa-gin-o-gaun). These homes were fashioned from nature's building supplies: young, flexible birch poles tied together with basswood roots for the frame and layered birch bark used for siding.

MN Historical Society

For the Ojibwe Indians, a central fire ring served as a communal cooking and gathering location hosting meals and ceremonies. Here they often gave thanks to their creator for providing the resources they needed.

Upper Bench

Depending on the time of year, blueberries, raspberries, or strawberries flourish throughout the park.

During the 1930s, berries were a common commercial product for the Ojibwe people. They often picked and sold the berries to markets throughout the Midwest.

Today visitors may pick up to one gallon of berries per day, per person, within the park for personal consumption.



Rose Levy Beranbaum



Ann Louise Hagevi

Unimproved Trail

As you follow the rock cairns, vegetation thins and rock becomes more prominent. Thousands of years ago, a glacier scoured the landscape and scraped away all prior soil and plants. Erosion from this glacier created the foundation for the ecological community you see today. In many places, only a few inches of topsoil sustains the vegetation within the park.

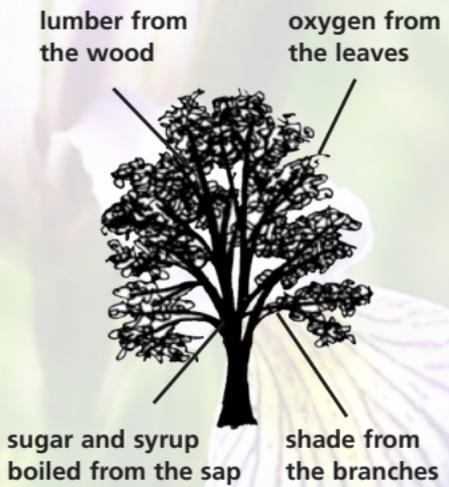


Rock cairns mark the unimproved trail.

Plants in Our Lives

Perhaps today a tall pine gave you shade, the sweet smell of roses enhanced your walk, or beautiful wildflowers added color to your photos. Many of the native plants you discovered while on your journey through the garden play a significant role in your daily life, from the food you eat to the air you breathe. As you return to your community, explore the native plants in your own backyard.

Red Maple



The Ethno-botanical Garden site was restored with the generous support from the following park partners:

- Great Lakes Restoration Initiative
- Rose Berens, Bois Forte Heritage Center
- Voyageurs National Park Association
- Friends of Voyageurs National Park
- Conservation Corps of America
- Boy Scout Troop #145
- International Falls High School, Ojibwe Studies Class 2011
- Littlefork/Big Falls Junior High English Class 2011
- Koochiching County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Voyageurs National Park Staff

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