

POTAWATOMIC MEDICINES

By Huron H. Smith

PART III - MEDICINES

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[HISTORY](#)

[MATERIAL CULTURE](#)

[RELIGION](#)

[MEDICINE LODGE](#)

[PLANT MEDICINES](#)

[PART I](#)

[PART II](#)

[PART III](#)

[FOOD PLANTS](#)

[VEGETABLE FIBERS](#)

OPHIOGLOSSACEAE (ADDER'S TONGUE FAMILY)

Virginia Grape Fern (*Botrychium virginianum* [L.] Sw.)¹⁹⁴

"kêdîgi'dji'bîkagûk" [zigzag root plant], "kêtkîdji'kakûk" [zigzag root plant.], "tcatcetcî'kakûk" [zigzag root]. In the Prairie Potawatomi language this plant was called "kajidji'bîkûkûk" [zigzag root]. While everyone seemed to know this root and have a name for it, the writer was unable to find its application in medicines, except in combinations. The root was considered a medicine by all of them. Among the whites,¹⁹⁵ the leaves have been valued for their astringent and vulnerary properties.

ORCHIDACEAE (ORCHID FAMILY)

Rattlesnake Plantain (*Goodyera repens* [L.] R.Br. ex Ait. f.),

"kêdîgi'bagûk" [spotted leaf]. The Forest Potawatomi prize the root and leaves of this plant very highly because it is so hard to find and valuable to them in the treatment of female disorders. They also find it of value in the treatment of stomach and bladder diseases. Captain Jonathan Carver¹⁹⁶ traveled among the Forest Potawatomi in 1796 and noted the use of a great many plants for medicine. Perhaps his most curious reference to the efficacy of any of these plants is in connection with this Rattlesnake Plantain. He says that the Indians used the leaves for the bite of reptiles, chewing it and applying it immediately to the wound, at the same time swallowing some of the juice. He said that the Indians, for spirituous liquor, will at any time permit a rattlesnake to drive his fangs into their flesh. He notes that the plant is most common where venomous snakes are most abundant. Among the whites¹⁹⁷ the whole plant is esteemed for its demulcent, ophthalmic and anti-scrofulous properties. Another authority¹⁹⁸ states that the leaves have been used in poultice form to cure severe cases of scrofula. Infusion of the leaves have been used by eclectic

practitioners as a wash to cure scrofula and as a wash for diseases of the eye.

OXALIDACEAE (WOOD SORREL FAMILY)

Common Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis Acetosella* L.) "siwo'bîgons" [sour weed]. The Forest Potawatomi do not use this as a medicine but rather as a food. Among the whites¹⁹⁹ the whole plant is used for its acid, refrigerant, diuretic and irritant properties. Another authority²⁰⁰ says that the plant has been used for its cooling and diuretic properties. It has been used in fevers, hemorrhages, gonorrhoea, chronic catarrh, urinary affections, scurvy, etc.

PAPAVERACEAE (POPPY FAMILY)

Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis* L.)²⁰¹ "mackwasdji'bîkûkûk" [red root plant]. The Prairie Potawatomi call this plant "maskwa'we" or "mêskwa" [red]. The Forest Potawatomi steep the root for an infusion which is used to cure diphtheria, which they recognize as a disease of the throat. They also squeeze out drops of the juice on maple sugar to use as a throat lozenge to cure mild cases of sore throat. Among the whites,²⁰² the root is used for its emetic, sedative, febrifuge, stimulant, tonic, diuretic and emmenagogue properties. Another authority²⁰³ states that the root is used for stimulant and tonic properties in cases of bronchitis, laryngitis, whooping cough, liver diseases, scrofula and dysentery. An infusion is used in skin diseases.

PARMELIACEAE (LICHENS)

Lichen (*Parmelia physodes* [L.] Ach.) which grows upon a spruce tree, "wakwûnûk" [egg bush]. The Potawatomi only use lichens that are found upon spruce trees and while they are apt to eat it as they find it in the woods, as a cure for constipation, it was usually soaked or boiled in water until it swelled somewhat. It is also used as a food.

PINACEAE (PINE FAMILY)

Balsam Fir (*Abies balsamea* [L.] Mill.)²⁰⁴ "kêki'ntebä" [peaked top]. The Forest Potawatomi gather the resinous exudate from the blisters on the trunk of the Balsam Fir, and use it, just as it comes from the blisters, for colds. Although they sometimes gather it in a bottle, it is more often that they go to the trees, open the blisters with their thumb nail and pick out the drops of Balsam to swallow fresh to cure a cold. Where it is gathered, it is saved in a bottle and used as a salve to heal sores. Perhaps the cure results as much from the exclusion of air from the sore surface as it does from the medicinal qualities of the Balsam. They also make an infusion of the bark to drink for curing consumption and other internal affections. Among the whites,²⁰⁵ the bark extract is considered stimulant, diuretic, anthelmintic, deturgent and vulnerary. The Dispensatory²⁰⁶ records the practice of the Hudson Bay Indians who peel the bark, leaving the resin vesicles exposed and dry it. They call this "weakoc" and apply it to wounds. According to the National Dispensatory, it is valuable for its bitter and astringent properties. Many people have made pillows from the dried

leaves of the Balsam Fir for the pleasant aroma that is considered to give relief from hay-fever and colds.

Common Juniper (*Juniperus communis* L.) "aca'wûskonis" [yellow liquid]. The Forest Potawatomi use the berries of the Common Juniper in combination with either the American Fly Honeysuckle (*Lonicera canadensis*) bark or the root of the Bush Honeysuckle (*Diervilla Lonicera*) as a cure for various diseases of the urinary tract. In fact, the same Indian word is sometimes applied to Bush Honeysuckle as to the Common Juniper. Among the whites,²⁰⁷ both the inner bark and the leaves are used as an aromatic. The berries have diuretic properties.

Tamarack (*Larix laricina* [DuRoi] Koch)²⁰⁸ "monîba'namîc". The Forest Potawatomi use the bark and the leaves of the Tamarack in just the same manner as the Menomini use it. They gather bark from both the root and the trunk. The fresh inner bark is used for poulticing wounds and inflammations while the steeped bark becomes a medicinal tea. They say that it drives out inflammation and generates heat within the body. In considering this as a medicine, they say that it is equal to one man and therefore becomes a medicine by itself, without the addition of any other ingredients. The Forest Potawatomi also use it as a horse medicine. They mix the shredded inner bark with oats which are fed to the animal and this makes his hide loose so that it slips around when you pinch it. Among the whites,²⁰⁹ the inner bark is esteemed for its laxative, tonic, diuretic and alterative properties. The Dispensatory²¹⁰ states that the bark is used to make a tamarack extract or tamarack tincture which is valuable in treating bronchitis, and chronic inflammation of the urinary passages, etc.

Black Spruce (*Picea mariana* [Mill.] BSP.) "kawa'ndag" [coarse evergreen]. The Forest Potawatomi make poultices from the inner bark of this swamp tree to apply to inflammations where infection is suspected. Among the whites,²¹¹ the inner bark is used for its alterative, diuretic and stimulant qualities.

Jack Pine (*Pinus Banksiana* Lamb.) "bêgi'wîc cîngwak" [pitchy-pine]. Among the Forest Potawatomi, the pitch is considered medicinal. The pitch is obtained from boiling the cone of the tree and the resultant pitch is the basis of an ointment. The leaves of the Jack Pine are used as a fumigant, "nokwe'sîkûn", to revive patients who are in a coma and to clear the lungs where there is congestion. We have no record of its use by the whites.

Norway Pine (*Pinus resinosa* Ait.) "bagkwînaga'mîc" [leaf-evergreen tree]. The Forest Potawatomi use the leaves of this pine also as a reviver or "nokwe'sîkûn" in the same manner as they use others of this same class. Among the whites,²¹² we have no record of its use as a medicine although it is known to yield a hard resin.

White Pine (*Pinus Strobus* L.) "cîngwak" [pine]. The Forest Potawatomi use the pitch or resin of the wood and the bark as the base of a salve. Among the whites,²¹³ the inner bark and sprigs of white pine yield an extract which is noted for its expectorant properties. It has been used in many patent medicines for coughs and colds and all throat troubles.

Arbor Vitae (*Thuja occidentalis* L.)²¹⁴ "gîciga'ntûk" [sky leaf]. The Forest Potawatomi use the leaves in making poultices and also in many combinations with other roots and leaves as medicine. It serves also as a

seasoner for other compounds. It is also smudged upon coals as a purifier and is supposed to exorcise the evil spirits that are inimical to recovery. Among the whites,²¹⁵ the leaves are valued for their stimulant, diaphoretic, anthelmintic, febrifuge and anti-spasmodic properties. Another authority,²¹⁶ states that the branches and leaves yield an extract which is useful in treating coughs, fevers, catarrh, rheumatism and scurvy. Boiled, in lard, the leaves yield the leaf oil and make an excellent salve.

Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis* [L.] Carr.)²¹⁷ "kakagi'wîc" [raven's wood]. The Forest Potawatomi use the leaves of the Hemlock to brew a tea which causes the patient to break out with copious perspiration and is valuable for breaking up a cold. The inner bark of the Hemlock is mixed with other medicaments to cure the flux. It is doubtless valuable for this purpose on account of its astringent properties. Among the whites,²¹⁸ the inner bark of the Hemlock is used for its astringent and diaphoretic qualities. The leaves are said to have the property of causing abortion. Another authority,²¹⁹ states that the bark is a powerful astringent.

PLANTAGINACEAE (PLANTAIN FAMILY)

Common Plantain (*Plantago major* L.) "anakogo'wûck" [choke weed]. According to Mrs. Spoon, the proper name for this plant is "nonagonawûck soskwosa'wanagaä'cikîk" [fernmuskkrat- tail-like]. According to the Prairie Potawatomi, the name of it is "mûkitca'kwo" [spotted frog]. The Forest Potawatomi have a use suggested by the first name given,—choke weed. When the root is boiled, it furnishes a slippery fluid. A patient who is choking upon a bone in the throat is given this fluid to drink, which will so lubricate the lining of the throat that the bone will either pass on down the throat or can be coughed up. The Forest Potawatomi also use the heated leaf of the plant, to bind upon swellings and inflammations. Among the whites,²²⁰ the entire plant has alterative, diuretic, antiseptic and antisyphilitic properties. Another authority,²²¹ says that the leaves have been used in infusions to ease the phlegm in tuberculosis. The fresh leaves have been used to dress wounds and heal sores. When bound over the anus, they have been said to cure protruding piles.

POLYGONACEAE (BUCKWHEAT FAMILY)

Hartwright's Persicaria (*Polygonum amphibium* L. var. *Hartwrightii* [Gray] Bissell) "aîanko'gîniak" [crooked]. The Forest Potawatomi used the root of this as a medicine but the particular use was not stated. Among the whites,²²² the root of this plant has been used for a blood purifier. According to the Dispensatory²²³ about forty species of *Polygonum* have been reported as being used for medicine.

Carey's Persicaria (*Polygonum Carey* Oiney) "îaîanko'gînk" [jointed]. The Forest Potawatomi use the entire plant to make a tea to cure a cold that is accompanied by fever. We have no record of its use among the whites.

Fringed Black Bindweed (*Polygonum cilinode* Michx.) "bebamaki'k" [running vine]. The Forest Potawatomi do not know this plant and therefore have no specific name for it other than "running vine". They have no use for it to our knowledge. We have no record of its use among the

whites.

Black Bindweed (*Polygonum Convolvulus* L.) The Forest Potawatomi have no name or use for this plant to our knowledge. Among the whites²²⁴ it is recorded that the seed of this species has been used for food the same as buckwheat.

Dock-leaved Persicaria (*Polygonum lapathi-folium* L.) "wisa'-gîbag"[bitter weed]. According to Mrs. Spoon, the name for this plant is "a'ianko'geneak" [jointed weed]. The whole plant is used by the Forest Potawatomi to make a tea for curing fevers. We have no record of its use by the whites.

Arrow-leaved Tear-thumb (*Polygonum sagittatum* L.) "äsûkîta'-boe" [stickers]. While this plant is given a name, descriptive of its properties by the Potawatomi, it was not used as medicine to our knowledge. We have no record of its use among the whites.

Great Water Dock (*Rumex Britannica* L.) While there is no Indian name given to this plant by the Forest Potawatomi as far as we know, still they use the root as a blood purifier. Among the whites,²²⁵ the root is considered to have the same properties as *Rumex crispus* which are alterative, tonic, blood purifying, astringent and antiscorbutic. The Dispensatory,²²⁶ states that the root has tonic, laxative, alterative and diuretic properties. It has been used in cases of scorbutus, cutaneous scrofula, cancer, syphilis, leprosy, elephantiasis, and as a blood purifier. The fresh root has been boiled in lard to furnish an ointment for the treatment of scrofula.

POLYPODIACEAE (FERN FAMILY)

Maidenhair Fern (*Adiantum pedatum* L.) "memakate'wîga'têûk" [black leg]. The Forest Potawatomi used an infusion of the root to cure caked breasts in the nursing mother. It is drunk as a tea. Among the whites,²²⁷ the entire plant has been used for its pectoral, mucilaginous, expectorant, refrigerant and tonic properties. Another authority²²⁸ says that the herb has been used for its refrigerant, expectorant, tonic and sub-astringent properties. It has been used as a decoction in febrile diseases, helps coughs, catarrh, hoarseness, influenza, asthma and pleurisy.

Crested Shield Fern (*Aspidium cristatum* [L.] Sw.) "nonagûna'-wûsk" [fern or milk breast]. The Forest Potawatomi have no medicinal use for this plant to our knowledge. We have no record of its use by the whites.

Lady Fern (*Asplenium Filix-femina* [L.] Bernh.) "nonagona'wûsk" [milk weed], and "nanagana'wûck" [milk weed]. This is the common Indian word among the Forest Potawatomi for all ferns and is probably derived from the use to which they put many of the roots. A root tea is made for relieving caked breasts in a nursing mother. It is also used for various female disorders. Among the whites,²²⁹ the root is used for its anthelmintic and vermifuge properties.

PRIMULACEAE (PRIMROSE FAMILY)

Tufted Loosestrife (*Lysimachia thyrsiflora* L.). This plant was unknown to the Forest Potawatomi and they had no name or use for it to our knowledge. We have no record of its use among the whites.

American Starflower (*Trientalis americana* [Pers.] Pursh.). The Forest Potawatomi did not know this plant and had no name or use for it to our knowledge. We have no record of its use among the whites.

RANUNCULACEAE (CROWFOOT FAMILY)

Red Baneberry (*Actaea rubra* [Ait.] Willd.) "wasgobîdji'-bîkeok" [sweet root plant]. The Forest Potawatomi used the root of the Red Baneberry to make a tea administered to purge the patient of after-birth. Among the whites,²³⁰ the root has been used for its purgative and emetic properties. According to the Dispensary,²³¹ the Baneberry root greatly resembles in appearance and properties the Black Cohosh (*Cimicifuga racemosa*) and has been wholly substituted for it in many cases. It has been used in cases of ovarian neuralgia, uterine tenderness, subinvolution, and as a substitute for digitalis in the treatment of fatty or irritable heart. It affords some relief for a headache which is due to eye strain.

Goldthread (*Coptis trifolia* [L.] Salisb.)²³² "asa'wasdji'bîkêns" [small yellow root]. The Forest Potawatomi used the thread-like root of this plant for curing sore gums and for lessening the pain of teething babies. Carver²³³ wrote about the use of the Goldthread root by the Potawatomi Indians to cure mouth sores. Among the whites,²³⁴ the root has been used for its bitter and tonic properties and for the treatment of mouth cankers. Another authority,²³⁵ states that the root has been used for its bitter and tonic properties resembling quassia and columbo without their astringent properties. The root extract has been used in cases of dysentery and chronic inflammation of the stomach.

Liverleaf (*Hepatica triloba* Chaix.)²³⁶ "asawûsk" [yellow weed]. The Prairie Potawatomi name for this plant is "wawitci'pasa". The Forest Potawatomi use the root and the leaves to make a sweetish-tasting tea to relieve cases of vertigo. Among the whites,²³⁷ the entire plant is valued for its mucilaginous, astringent, hepatic and pectoral properties. Another authority²³⁸ says that the entire plant is mucilaginous and astringent and used in infusions in fevers, diseases of the liver, bleeding from the lungs, coughs, etc.

Bristly Crowfoot (*Ranunculus pennsylvanicus* L. f.) "asa'wûck" [yellow weed]. Mrs. Spoon uses the entire plant of the Bristly Crowfoot for an astringent medicine, disease unstated. Among the whites²³⁹ the entire plant is used for its acrid, rubi-facient, counterirritant, and narcotic properties.

Purple Meadow Rue (*Thalictrum dasycarpum* Fisch. & Lall.)²⁴⁰ "akwatîci'wûk" [mint leaf]. The Prairie Potawatomi called this plant "kakaki'wûskwe" [crow woman weed], and the seed of the plant is used as a love medicine. When a man and his wife have been quarreling, the seeds are surreptitiously placed in their food to overcome the quarrelsome dispositions. The Forest Potawatomi use the leaves and the seeds in combination with other materials to cure the cramps. The seeds are peppered upon the surface of poultices to make them more effective.

Among the whites,²⁴¹ the root of Purple Meadow Rue is valued for its purgative and diuretic properties. The Dispensatory²⁴² says that the Purple Meadow Rue contains berberine and has been used as a bitter and a tonic, especially useful in treating leucorrhea.

RHAMNACEAE (BUCKTHORN FAMILY)

Alder-leaved Buckthorn (*Rhamnus alnifolia* L'Her.) "mûkwo'mînaga'wîc" [bear weed]. The Forest Potawatomi use the inner bark of the buckthorn for a physic. It is probably as useful as the white man's medicine *Rhamnus cathartica* from which Cascara Sagrada is obtained, although there is no record of the Alder-leaved Buckthorn being used by the whites.²⁴³

ROSACEAE (ROSE FAMILY)

Agrimony (*Agrimonia gryposepala* Wallr.) "äsûkîtä'boe" [stickers], The Forest Potawatomi have no medicinal use for this plant to our knowledge but the Prairie Potawatomi, under the name "sukitapua" [stickers], use the plant as a styptic and snuff an infusion up the nostrils to stop the nose-bleed. Among the whites,²⁴⁴ the entire plant was used for its astringent properties and tonic effect upon the stomach. The Dispensatory²⁴⁵ records the use of the root and leaves as a mild tonic, alterative and astringent. It says that Indians in Canada and the United States have used the root for reducing fevers.

Juneberry (*Amelanchier spicata* [Lam.] K. Koch) "bosîkwa'-komînûn" [plum-berry]. The Forest Potawatomi use the root bark of the Juneberry to make a tonic. Under the name "gozikwa'kominuk" [thorny-berry], the Ojibwe of Lac du Flambeau use the bark for medicine but we do not know for what ailment. The Pillager Ojibwe under the same name, say that the bark is used to make a tea for the expectant mother. We have no record of its use for medicine by the whites.

Black Chokeberry (*Pyrus [Aronia] melanocarpa* [Michx.] Willd.) "nîki'mînûn" [wild goose-berry]. Another informant called it "sakwako'mînûn" or "sakwako'mînawûn". The Forest Potawatomi steep the berry to make a tea to cure a cold. Among the whites,²⁴⁶ the berries are used for their astringent properties. The Dispensatory²⁴⁷ says that the bark has been used among eclectic practitioners for its astringent properties.

Bicknell's Thorn (*Crataegus rotundifolia* Moench var. *Bicknellii* Eggleston) "mînesaga'wîc" [thorn bush]. The Forest Potawatomi use the apples as a medicine to cure stomach complaints. Among the whites,²⁴⁸ the leaves have been used in medicines considered proper for relieving infections of the chest. The Dispensatory²⁴⁹ says that the apples have been used for their astringent and heart tonic properties.

European Wood Strawberry (*Fragaria vesca* L.) "ate'imîn bagogä'cikîk" [heartberry-leaf-resembles]. The Forest Potawatomi use the root of the strawberry for the treatment of stomach complaints. Among the whites,²⁵⁰ the leaves have been valued for their astringent, tonic and diuretic properties, while the fruit has been ascribed diuretic and refrigerant

properties. Another authority²⁵¹ says that a tea has been made from the herb which has astringent and tonic properties. The infusion has been used for convalescents especially children, who are recovering from bowel and bladder weaknesses.

Rough Cinquefoil (*Potentilla monspeliensis* L.)

"ä'sûkîtä'boe" [stickers]. The root of this plant is known to be medicine to the Forest Potawatomi but our informant was not able to tell us the malady it is supposed to cure. Among the white,²⁵² the root has been valued for its astringent properties.

Marsh Cinquefoil (*Potentilla palustris* [L.] Scop.). We have no record of a name or use for this plant by the Forest Potawatomi nor of its use by the whites.

Bird Cherry (*Prunus pennsylvanica* L. f.) "wîgwa'ssimîne'son" [birch cherries]. The Forest Potawatomi use the inner bark of the Bird Cherry to make a tea to cure a cough and alleviate internal pain. Among the whites,²⁵³ the inner bark is esteemed for its bitter, acrid, tonic, and astringent properties.

Wild Cherry (*Prunus serotina* Ehrh.)²⁵⁴ "okwe'mînûn" [grub-worm berry]. The Forest Potawatomi use the inner bark of the Wild Cherry as a seasoner for other combinations of medicines. Among the whites,²⁵⁵ the inner bark is valued for its bitter, tonic, stimulant, sedative, pectoral and poisonous properties. Another authority²⁵⁶ says that the inner bark is valued for its sedative, pectoral, aromatic and bitter, tonic and astringent properties. It has been used by eclectic practitioners in treating consumption, coughs, bronchitis, scrofula, heart palpitation, stomach atony, dyspepsia and hectic fevers.

Choke Cherry (*Prunus virginiana* L.)²⁵⁷ "sûswe'mînaga'wîc" [choke bush]. The Prairie Potawatomi name is very similar for this tree—"soswa'mînûn" [choke berry]. The Forest Potawatomi use the bark for an eye-wash and make a tonic drink from the berries. The Dispensatory²⁵⁸ states that Choke Cherry is official in our pharmacopoeas but is actually made from *Prunus serotina*. It has a sedative action which is quite transitory, but the syrup of Wild Cherry bark makes a pleasing mask for other drugs.

Mountain Ash (*Sorbus americana* [Marsh.] DC.) "mûkwo'mîc" [bear timber]. The Forest Potawatomi state that the bear eats the berries of the Mountain Ash and that they use the inner bark for a medicine, but we were unable to find out what ailments it was supposed to cure. Among the whites,²⁵⁹ the inner bark is esteemed among eclectic practitioners for its astringent, tonic and detergent properties while the fruit is considered an esculent and an antiscorbutic.

European Mountain Ash (*Sorbus Aucuparia* [L.] Ehrh.) "mûkwo'mînaga'wîc" [bear bush]. It is rather peculiar to find a Forest Potawatomi using this cultivated tree for medicine. It is very likely that the native Mountain Ash so much resembles the cultivated one that they mistook the identification of this plant. The leaves are used to make a tea for colds. The leaves are steeped in hot water, which causes the patient to vomit and at that time the extra mucous is expelled. This makes it valuable in their estimation for the treatment of pneumonia, diphtheria and croup. Among the whites,²⁶⁰ the bark is esteemed for its astringent, tonic and detergent

properties. The fruit is considered edible and a preventative of scurvy. The Dispensatory²⁶¹ says that the fruit has been used as an anti-scorbutic.

Smooth Rose (*Rosa blanda* Ait.)²⁶² "cipitiä'mîn" [toilet paper]. The Prairie Potawatomi also call this plant "sipitiä'mîn". The Forest Potawatomi use the root of the Smooth Rose for medicine whereas the Prairie Potawatomi use the skin of the rose hips. The Forest Potawatomi make a tea for the treatment of lumbago and headaches. Among the whites,²⁶³ the flowers of the Smooth Rose are used among eclectic practitioners for their astringent, tonic and ophthalmic properties.

Blackberry (*Rubus allegheniensis* Porter)²⁶⁴ "kate'omînûk" [black berry plant]. The name for this plant assigned to it by the Forest Potawatomi, is doubtless a shortening of "makate'mîsku'mînog" [blackberry bushes], as it is given by Pokagon.²⁶⁵ The Prairie Potawatomi call it "kêtä'mîn" which is evidently also a shortened form of Blackberry and they use the root bark for treating sore eyes. The Forest Potawatomi, however, did not have any medicinal use for the plant as far as we found, using it only for food. Among the whites,²⁶⁶ the fruit is considered edible, diuretic and astringent, while the bark is considered astringent. The Dispensatory²⁶⁷ records the use of the root bark for its tonic and astringent properties. It has been used in treating the summer diarrhea of children and adults. Another authority²⁶⁸ records the use of the leaves, the root and the fruit for their astringent and tonic properties. It says that it is used for indigestion, to cure a coated tongue and to remove tenacious and offensive saliva.

Red Raspberry (*Rubus idaeus* L. var. *aculeatissimus* [C. A. Mey.] Regel & Tiling),²⁶⁹ "maskwo'mînaga'wûck" [red berry bush]. The root of the Red Raspberry is made into an infusion to use as an eye wash by the Forest Potawatomi. Among the whites,²⁷⁰ the bark of the root, the root and the leaves are all considered medicinal and astringent. A decoction of the leaves or of the inflorescence is reported to be an excellent remedy in diarrhea, dysentery and cholera infantum. It has also been used as a wash and injection for leucorrhœa, gleet, gonorrhœa and prolapsus uteri. A decoction of the leaves has been combined with cream by eclectic practitioners to suppress nausea and vomiting. It has also been sometimes used as an aid to labor to promote uterine contractions where ergot has failed. Another authority²⁷¹ considers the fruit as esculent and laxative, while a decoction of the leaves has been used for its anti-emetic, purgative and astringent properties. The Dispensatory²⁷² records the use of root syrup of the Red Raspberry as a refrigerant, mild laxative and dietetic.

Willow-leaved Meadow-sweet (*Spiraea salicifolia* L.) "cêskwo'mîc" [muskrat bush]. Among the Forest Potawatomi, the bark is considered medicinal but the use of this medicine was not stated.

Among the whites,²⁷³ the root of this plant is valued for its tonic and esculent properties, while the herbage is used for its astringent and diuretic properties. The Dispensatory²⁷⁴ considers the plant to be identical in value with *Spiraea Filipendula* in which case the herbage is used for an astringent and diuretic.

RUBIACEAE (MADDER FAMILY)

Rough Bedstraw (*Galium asprellum* Michx.). The Forest Potawatomi have no name or use for this plant to our knowledge. Among the whites,²⁷⁵ the entire plant is used in the same manner as Galium Aparine for its demulcent and diuretic properties.

RUTACEAE (RUE FAMILY)

Prickly Ash (*Zanthoxylum americanum* Mill.). Carver²⁷⁶ reports on his travels that he found the Forest Potawatomi using the root bark of Prickly Ash to effect a cure for gonorrhea. We found none of the present day Forest Potawatomi using this medicine, perhaps because it grew too far away from their immediate vicinity. Undoubtedly they do use the Prickly Ash as all of our other Wisconsin Indians do. Among the whites,²⁷⁷ the bark is used for its pungent, stimulant, sialogogic, alterative and tonic properties. The Dispensatory²⁷⁸ says that the medicinal qualities of *Zanthoxylum* are not well defined. It has mild diaphoretic properties due to its stimulant action upon the circulation and nervous system. It has been used locally as an irritant and has been used as a sialogogue and a topical application to influence deep-seated inflammation. Another authority²⁷⁹ states that it has been used as a stimulant, tonic, alterative and sialogogue. The berries are stimulant, carminative and anti-spasmodic, acting particularly upon the mucous tissues.

SALICACEAE (WILLOW FAMILY)

Balsam Poplar (*Populus balsamifera* L.) "macamîdi's" [poplar]. Another informant gives it the name "manasa'dis" [perfume poplar]. The Forest Potawatomi count this one of their most valuable remedies for making salve. The winter buds are melted with mutton or bear tallow to form an ointment for persistent sores and to cure eczema. Among the whites,²⁸⁰ the resinous buds have been used as a balsamic ingredient of plasters. Another authority²⁸¹ states that the buds are valued for their stimulant, tonic, diuretic and anti-scorbutic properties. A tincture of the buds is used in stomach and kidney trouble to cure scurvy and rheumatism. Gout and rheumatism are treated by extracts of the bark which is known to be tonic and cathartic.

Quaking Aspen (*Populus tremuloides* Michx.) "mîdis" [Aspen]. The Forest Potawatomi sometimes use the Ojibwe name for this "asa'dis" [rabbit food]. The Prairie Potawatomi call it "mîtwi". The Forest Potawatomi burn the bark of the Quaking Aspen and save the ashes to mix with lard which forms a salve to apply to sores upon horses. Among the whites²⁸² the bark is valued for its tonic, stomachic, febrifuge and aperient properties. Another authority²⁸³ records the use of the bark and leaves in acute rheumatism, to lower the temperature in fevers, to relieve pain and to reduce arterial swellings, to treat coryza, hay-fever, influenza, neuralgia and diabetes. Among eclectic practitioners, it has been used externally as a wash for gangrenous wounds, eczema, cancer, burns, fetid perspiration and as a wash. When it is used as a wash, borax is added to the bark extract.

Pussy Willow (*Salix discolor* Muhl.) "sisigo'bamîc" [willow]. Among the Forest Potawatomi, the bark is a universal remedy and any species of willow will have approximately the same Indian name as here given. The root bark is boiled down to make a tea, which is used in stopping a

hemorrhage. We find that the willow galls have no meaning to the Potawatomi whereas they were valuable for medicine to the Menomini, because they were galls rather than because they were from a willow tree. Among the whites,²⁸⁴ the bark has been used among eclectic practitioners for its bitter, astringent, antiseptic, deturgent and aperient properties. The buds have been considered anti-aphrodisiac. The Dispensatory²⁸⁵ states that the bark has been used as a stomachic and aperient by eclectics, for the treatment of intermittent fevers, but is rarely used now.

Slender Willow (*Salix petiolaris* J. E. Smith) "sisigo'bamîc" [willow]. The Slender Willow is used by the Forest Potawatomi in the same manner as others of the willows and particularly just as *Salix discolor* was used by the Forest Potawatomi and also by the whites.

FOOTNOTES:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| 194 Present, V 4, P 3, fig. 2. | 224 Nickell, P. 106. | 254 Present, V4, P1,fig 3. |
| 195 Nickell, p. 29. | 225 Nickell, P. 117 | 255 Nickell, p. 109. |
| 196 Carver, p. 343. | 226 Nat'l. Disp., p. 1410. | 256 Herbalist, p. 251. |
| 197 Nickell, p. 67. | 227 Nickell, P. 11. | 257 Present, V4, P1,fig 1. |
| 198 Herbalist, p. 180. | 228 Herbalist, p. 138. | 258 Nat'l. Disp., p. 1330. |
| 199 Nickell, p. 97. | 229 Nickell, p. 24. | 259 Nickell, p. 129. |
| 200 Herbalist, p. 266. | 230 Nickell, p. 110. | 260 Nickell, p. 129. |
| 201 Present. V 4, P 1, fig. 2. | 231 Nat'l. Disp., p. 463. | 261 Nat'l. Disp., p. 11402. |
| 202 Nickell, p. 120. | 232 Present, VI. 4, Part 3, pl. LXXV, fig. 1. | 262 Present, V4, P2,fig 3. |
| 203 Herbalist, p. 41. | 233 Carver, p. 341. | 263 Nickell, p. 116. |
| 204 Present, V 4, P 3, fig. 1. | 234 Nickell, p. 46. | 264 Present, V4, P1,fig 4. |
| 205 Nickell, p. 7. | 235 Herbalist, p. 93. | 265 Pokagon, p. 92. |
| 206 Nat'l. Disp., p. 1620. | 236 Present, Vol. 4, Part 1, pl. XXI, fig. 2. | 266 Nickell, p. 116. |
| 207 Nickell, p. 76. | 237 Nickell, p. 70. | 267 Nat'l. Disp., p. 1408. |
| 208 Present, V 4, P 1, fig. 3. | 238 Herbalist, p. 124. | 268 Herbalist, p. 44. |
| 209 Nickell, p. 78. | 239 Nickell, p. 113. | 269 Present, V4, P1, fig3. |
| 210 Nat'l. Disp., p. 1266. | 240 Present, Vol. 4, Pt 3, pl. LXXIII, fig. 1. | 270 Herbalist, p. 182. |
| 211 Nickell, p. 7. | 241 Nickell, p. 134. | 271 Nickell, p. 116. |
| 212 Nickell, p. 102. | 242 Nat'l. Disp., p. 1380. | 272 Nat'l. Disp., p. 1409. |
| 213 Herbalist, p. 249. | 243 I will vouch for it - MM | 273 Nickell, p. 130. |
| 214 Present, V 4, P 1, fig. 3. | 244 Nickell, p. 11. | 274 Nat'l. Disp., p. 1402. |
| 215 Nickell, p. 135. | 245 Nat'l. Dis., p. 202. | 275 Nickell, p. 63. |
| 216 Herbalist, p. 237. | 246 Nickell, p. 111. | 276 Carver, p. 258. |
| 217 Present, V 4, P 1, fig. 2. | 247 Nat'l. Disp., p. 1402. | 277 Nickell, p. 143. |
| 218 Nickell, p. 7. | 248 Nickell, p. 49. | 278 Nat'l. Disp., p. 1766. |

219 Herbalist, p. 111. 249 Nat'l. Disp., p. 1403. 279 Herbalist, p. 171.
220 Nickell, p. 104. 250 Nickell, p. 62. 280 Nickell, p. 107.
221 Herbalist, p. 170. 251 Herbalist, p. 259. 281 Herbalist, p. 234.
222 Nickell, P. 105. 252 Nickell, p. 107. 282 Nickell, p. 107.
223 Nat'l. Disp., p. 1290. 253 Nickell, p. 109. 283 Herbalist. p. 173.

PLANT MEDICINES

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[HISTORY](#)

[MATERIAL CULTURE](#)

[RELIGION](#)

[MEDICINE LODGE](#)

[PART I](#)

[PART II](#)

[PART III](#)

[FOOD PLANTS](#)

[VEGETABLE FIBERS](#)

[EMAIL](#)

[HOME](#)

[INDEX](#)

[TRADING POST](#)