

Interview with Dani Tippman, Mary Tippman, and Mary Strack
 February 27, 2005
 Columbia City, Indiana (Dani's House)
 by Mike Gonella

Background

Mary Strack (mother of Dani, grandmother of Mary) visited her Uncle Ed (the priest), who lived with his sister Stella. Mary visited him often and he grew all kinds of things on his land. Ran also an orphanage. He had berry patches, peach trees, other fruit trees, and a big gardener. Her father was a Miami, but not sure where she learned her plant stuff from. Mary Strack lived in a family house, on 80 acres in Aricola, IN, about 10 miles east of Columbia City. Dani and two sisters grew up there. Her daughter, Dani, has much knowledge regarding plants as well as hunting, especially dressing, gutting deer and squirrels.

| Species | Cultural Use |
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| Staghorn Sumac | Making sumac tea: cut off inflorescences with red berries. At least three days of no rain before collecting because rain washed off reddish residue on hairs on berries that give tea its flavor. Best when fresh, although can keep inflorescence and make tea later. Put about two inflorescences in a quart jar (about 1/8 full) then pour in boiling water and steep for ten minutes. Water should turn reddish. If it turns green, don't drink, the tea is no good and can make you sick. Strain through cheesecloth and drink. High in vitamin C, drunk when having a cold. Pronounced as "shumac". |
| Wild Rice | Saw it growing around here in her younger days, maybe 20 years ago, more wet areas then. Agreed that probably traded for, mostly, and maybe harvested. Commented that it was a 'touchy' plant and couldn't grow in just any wet areas (of which there are less in the area) |
| Jerusalem Artichoke | Gathered in the wild and grew next to her house, cooked and ate. Grows as tall 10-14 feet. She collected her wild ones from somewhere near her house, called "Devil's Hollow" in Aboite Township, Allen County, IN . Dani's mother told her that there had been an Indian village there a long time ago (before Mary was born). Tubers are small—I showed her ones I collected near Miami Whitewater Forest. I gave her commercial variety (Jungle Jim's) that she hadn't seen |
| Sour Dock | Young leaves have slippery stuff on them, so she thinks Mildred's "slick dock" is just referring to the young leaves of Sour Dock. Curly dock is the same plant—some people call it curly dock, others sour dock. Sour dock is sour—leaves don't get bitter as they get bigger so collect all stages of leaves and cook as greens. Sour taste is expected so bigger, older leaves, more sour, are not considered bad like with older Dandelion or other greens. Can freeze (and does sometimes) leaves too, if plants/patches are so big that there's too much for one meal. Cook as greens and eat with butter and salt. |

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| Elderberry | Stem hollowed out and used as a tap/spigot for tapping a maple tree, or a whistle. Flower buds and flower heads can be deep fried. Berries made into jelly. |
| Pokeweed | Young shoots eaten. Mature berries used as a temporary paint on skin or paper that isn't going to be washed. Tops not eaten like milkweed—maybe, she thought, because the whole plant more poisonous. Also used to “deworm” dogs. She dries berries and feed a few to the dogs. “It's just enough to poison the worms but not the dogs” |
| Redhaw | Fruits eaten raw, or made into jelly or pies by them. |
| Wild plum | Put down the tablecloth first and shake the tree (MS). Its tart so add extra sugar if cooking. Gathered on MS property, washed, removed pits before or after cooking (D). Noted that there weren't as many of these as their used to be—due to loss of fencerows |
| Watercress | Gathered for eating when in Michigan, “up north”. Haven't seen any around their house. |
| Common Milkweed | Mary called it “Lenomeesha” (that's how it sounded when she said it). Same plant as common milkweed, says Dani. Can eat young shoots and tops (MS). Eat the top four leaves of plants as greens (D, MS). MS had a mole on the side of her face and used milkweed sap on it—didn't work. Dani has used sap on warts. When flowers are just in bud on the tops of plants, those are edible too. |
| Oak tree | Bark used once to tan hides (not sure where she heard) |
| Sweetgrass | No knowledge of it as Miami. Must be pan-Indian why its used today. |
| Day Lilly | Fry flowers. Cook flowering buds, or just petals. Buds eaten raw for a snack. |
| Wild Ginger | Harvest roots, grind, and used as a spice or chewed to alleviate motion sickness. Cook with honey to make candy. Thick and fine roots all have fine taste and scent. Dried, stored in the fridge. |
| Sweet everlasting | Leaves and flowers dried and mixed with tobacco. A man's herb. Women don't tend to or talk about its use. |
| Red Osier Dogwood | Also used as a tobacco mix. Another man's herb. |
| Arrowhead | Never gathered and used. Only cattail was the aquatic plant gathered. She thinks because they didn't live near still waters where AH and WL would grow. |
| Water lily | Never used |
| Skunk cabbage | Collected, cooked and spathe eaten. Dani says she wouldn't do it again unless she could stand the awful stink driving home with it in her car. Said the smell was gone after cooking and it tasted fine. |
| Buckeye | Necklace, bracelet and rings made with seeds and twine. Also just carrying it in your pocket. Good to keep rheumatism away. They gave me a necklace. One of MS's was about 40 years old and polished from rubbing with hands. |
| Pawpaw | Hardly any left anymore (MS), gathered and fruits eaten. |

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| Corn husk | Used in crafts (pictures taken). Strips of husk woven into a small “practice” basket (MT); thin strips braided and sewn together to make a cell phone holder using same style as her sweet grass basket; |
| | Corn cob drilled out and turkey quill as pipe used to smoke corn silk. I told them I thought it gave you a buzz and they laughed. |
| Black locust | Seeds used for necklaces, bracelets and buttons. Not eaten. |
| Sassafras | Roots harvested for making tea, “medicinal and delicious” (D). Growing in MS’s fencerow (now gone). The tea is good all year long, but especially in the spring when you get fresh roots. |
| Dandelion | Young leaves are collected and eaten. “Mom and her generation made them with bacon drippings. She used to make them like that for us when we were growing up. Sometimes I make them with vinegar and oil as a salad. Sometimes we just wilt them a little in the frying pan and then pour the bacon drippings over them. Mostly we boil them in water and then add butter and salt.” (D). MT and D go out and collect too. |
| Miami Red beans | Red with brown speckles. Obtained from her family/mom (?) |
| Miami corn | Dani has grown Miami corn. “Sometimes it is really short, and sometimes it is real tall. Maybe I don’t have as pure a strain as Daryl does” |
| Black beans | Has some black beans that a lady gave her. Will check for that name. |
| Miami Squash seed | From an anthropological Miami site (ancient). Got it from her mom and will ask her who gave it to her. Has yellowish skin and orange flesh. |
| Lamb’s Quarters | Eat as greens. Collects seeds and makes flour. Cut it in half with flour. Taught MT to do this and taught by her mom to do this. |
| Pigweed | Seeds gathered, ground, made into flour. |
| Spicebush | Fruits gathered, dried. Used as seasoning. Young, tender leaves used for tea. (she said tea was used as a nice, good tasting, refreshing drink). |
| Bull Thistle | Purple corolla pulled out of the calyx and chewed. Tasted sweet and made a nice purple spit. A chewing tobacco substitute that was better for you. |
| Wild Rose | Hips gathered and used to make jelly. Also eaten raw if they are sweet. “You have to find a good sweet patch of roses” |
| Plantain | Leaves gathered, thick, stringy veins removed and cooked as greens. Did not know medicinal properties. |
| Mullein | Leaves picked and cut into strips. Cooked in a pot of water and smoke inhaled by kids to cure a strong cough. Adults roll up dried leaves and smoke to cure strong coughs. |
| Hickory | Nuts gathered for eating |
| Redbud | Young, tender seed pods can be cooked and eaten like snow peas. Flowers eaten. |
| Queen Anne’s Lace/Wild Carrot | Asked if there are more than one varieties or species: One with black dot, one without? (Answered: black dot is Queen Anne’s lace, other is poison hemlock—don’t eat!!) Root harvested and eaten. Roots smell just like commercial carrots. |

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| Cattail | Root harvested in spring by using feet to dislodge the root. Don't need to clean, just cook and the inside part is eaten. Like a potato. She hasn't eaten it raw. |
| Dogbane | Used to make cordage—learned from Gwen Yeaman, etc. Not Miami learned. Did not know what old nets were made of. |
| Fleabane | Flower inflorescences gathered and dried and used to get rid of fleas. Mary gathered some for her boss at the gas station where she works who had 10 dogs with a big flea problem. The kid knew to gather the fleabane, did so, a whole pillowcase full and gave it to the teacher, who put it in their bed and got rid of problem in a few days. |
| Tobacco | Has seed that Daryl grows. Short tobacco that she thinks is wild, traditional one, <i>N. rustica</i> . Didn't talk a lot about it because it's a man's plant. Her mother grows tobacco and I asked her why. She said she can grow it now because she is no longer in Moon time (not menstruating) anymore, and her husband is dead, so he can't grow it. When women were in Moon time, women would not touch this stuff. |
| Colic root | Had not heard of this plants, showed specimen |
| Mushrooms | Her father knew a lot about. |
| Rheu. Root | Never heard of, no specimen shown. |
| Black root | Never heard of, black recognized as Black-eyed Susan. |
| Ginseng | Has harvested it from large, known patches. Just a little harvested each year. The Miami have talked about planting it in different places. |
| Jewelweed | Juice used for skin irritations (seen this at language camp last summer) |
| Sour Cherry | Uncle Ed grew |