

Interviews & Conversation with Miami Elders
Summer 2002 - 2004
Miami, OK (longhouse, HQ, etc.)
by Mike Gonella

Ken Dagenet

1. Common milkweed–eaten as greens (2004).
2. Sumac–stem of plant greater than an inch in diameter is used to make a pipestem: cut thick stem and hollow out with coat hanger or fire, stem used for pipe and pipestone for head. Pipe is decorated with beads. Ken recently made a Miami War Pipe with an elbow-shaped head, using a picture from a book for the head design (2002, 2004).
3. Dock–young leaves called "slick dock" gathered and eaten as greens (2004).

Howard Walker

1. Common milkweed was eaten as greens (2004).
2. Young leaves of dock plant called "slick dock" are gathered and eaten as greens (2004).

Judy Davis

1. Common milkweed was eaten as greens (2004).
2. Dock. The young leaves are called "slick dock" and gathered and eaten as greens (2004).
3. Lamb's quarters–young leaves gathered and cooked as greens. " It was used as a spring tonic for cleansing the body. The young leaves of poke, curly dock and lamb's quarters were gathered near my house, mixed together and cooked with vinegar" (2004).
4. Pokeweed–young leaves gathered and cooked as greens. " It was used as a spring tonic for cleansing the body. The young leaves of poke, curly dock and lamb's quarter's were gathered near my house, mixed together and cooked with vinegar" (2004).
5. Grapes (wild or domestic not distinguished) used for grape dumplings by tribes in 8 Tribes area (Miami, OK) (1996).

Mildred Walker

1. Common milkweed–eaten as greens (2004).
2. Dock–young leaves called "slick dock" and are gathered and eaten as greens (2004).

Beth Devers

1. Sweet flag–The root is chewed to treat sore throat and cough. Beth recalls her mother treating her cough and sore throat recently, with calamus root, which she chewed and the cough got better. "The root looked just like a chicken foot, all scaly, and yellow. Mom made us chew it or made tea with sugar" (Interview with Beth Devers, 2003; speaking of her mother, Mildred Walker).
2. Plantain–The leaves are collected and mashed into a poultice and put on sunburns for healing (Interview with Beth Devers, 2003; speaking about her mother's (Mildred Walker) plant use).

Patty English

1. Asparagus shoots are gathered and eaten as greens. "We've gathered wild asparagus for a long time around Salt Lake City" (2004).
2. Watercress is gathered and eaten (2004).

Deena Garza

1. Asparagus shoots are gathered and eaten as greens. "We've gathered wild asparagus for a long time around Salt Lake City" (2004).
2. Watercress is gathered and eaten (2004).

Evelyn Scott

1. Red cedar—Chief's medicine bag, used for blessing a grave or new building, contained tobacco and cedar. ". . . the chief usually had the medicine bag that has tobacco and cedar in it and uh he blesses the grave. . . the cedar is to purify things and the tobacco and the cedar is to get rid of evil spirits the way I understand it cause when they built this building they what you call smoked it. They use cedar and they put it in a little old pot and they kind of made a smudge out of it and they kind of used a fan maybe to keep it smoking and they'd go all around the room and smoke the building. . . they can take their hand and go like this you know get that smoke all over them and that's to get rid of evil spirits" (Interview by Kirsten Mathias and Reid Nelson, 1996).

Scott Shoemaker

1. Pine tree sap is spread on one's bottom to heal saddle soreness. Scott Shoemaker's great grandfather (by marriage) Camillus Bundy, taught Scott's grandfather, Frances Shoemaker (Phyllis' Miley's father) to ride horses and other wilderness skills on horseback trips into the woods for a few days. His grandfather got a sore bottom and his great grandfather told him to smear pine sap on it, and the soreness got better. His grandfather had said, "It made it [his bottom] sticky but it made it better" (Interview with Scott Schoemaker and Phyllis Miley, 2003).
2. Cattails are used—Leaves are peeled off and split the thick base of the leaves widthwise and place either side on a sinew line and bend over so the leaf hangs down for drying--water runs off. They are woven two ways: 1) around parallel stems with sinew or 2) Cattails leaves/stems are woven for floor mat (Interview with Gary and Scott Shoemaker, 2003).
3. Cattails are collected in August, when leaves are longer; collect when green (2003).

Chuck Wade

1. White sage—The chief smokes a sick person for healing. "the smoking ceremony, we think it kind of purifies us . . . If you're sick or anything the chief will come out and smoke you which we feel like it helps you get well . . . we use to make the smoke is cedar and cedar is a cleanser . . green cedar to get more smoke, we use tobacco, tobacco is a purifier and then we use sage and its for medicinal [probably white sage, currently used by many tribes for similar purposes] . . . there was some sweetgrass mixed with the combination of sage and tobacco uh and the cedar" (Interview by Brant Hall, 1999).

Jacob Weisenberger

1. Sumac used to make a bow handle—made from 3" or more diameter sumac stem (Interview with Jacob Weisenberger, 2004; speaking of his father's plant use).
2. Unknown plant—Gathered, hung upside down to dry, rolled into balls and chewed to relieve stomach ailments. Plant gathered after the first hard frost (2004; speaking of his father's plant use).
3. Hickory wood is used to make bow (Interview with Jacob Weisenberger, 2004; speaking of his father's plant use).

Mary Swenda

1. Watercress is gathered for eating (Interview with Dani Tippman 2005).
2. Dewberry—A vining plant growing close to the ground. It looks like a blackberry, only shorter and fatter, almost round, with little seeds. Harvested and used to make pies, jelly and put on ice cream (Personal communication with Mary (Strack) Swenda, by Dani Tippman 2005).
3. Elderberry berries are made into jelly; flower buds and heads can be deep fried and eaten; stems hollowed out and used as a tap for maple sugaring (Interview with Mary (Strack) Swenda, 2005).
4. Sassafras—the roots are harvested for making tea. "The tea is good all year long, but especially in the spring when you get fresh roots." For storage you can make shavings and dry. (Interview with Dani Tippman and Mary (Strack) Swenda, 2005).
5. Dandelion—young leaves collected and eaten. Cooked with bacon drippings in the past, or just boiled with butter and salt. Also eaten raw in a salad (Interview with Dani Tippman, Mary (Strack) Swenda and Mary Tippman, 2005).
6. Corn husks are used to make baskets. Cob drilled out to make pipe to smoke corn silk (Interview with Dani Tippman, Mary (Strack) Swenda and Mary Tippman, 2005).
7. Buckeye tree—necklace, bracelet and rings made with seeds, carried to keep rheumatism away (Interview with Dani Tippman, Mary (Strack) Swenda and Mary Tippman, 2005).
8. Common milkweed—young shoots, top four leaves of stems, and flower buds are gathered, cooked and eaten. Sap used to remove moles. Dani Tippman and her mother Mary (Strack) Swenda harvest the top four leaves of taller plants, or plants of any stage of growth and cook them as greens. "The four leaves represent the four directions," said Mary. The white milkweed, not eaten, was probably a name for dogbane, which looks reddish and not-fuzzy when young, unlike milkweed. She noticed the stems kept growing and flowered after the tops were removed for eating. Dani Tippman learned from her mother, Mary (Strack) Swenda, to harvest one out of every four milkweed stems. Called "lenomeesha" also (Interview with Dani Tippman and Mary (Strack) Swenda, 2005).
9. Pawpaw: fruits gathered and eaten (Interview with Dani Tippman and Mary (Strack) Swenda, 2005).
10. Bull thistle corolla is pulled out of the calyx and chewed. "A good chewing tobacco substitute that makes a nice purple spit" (Interview with Dani Tippman & Mary (Strack) Swenda, 2005).
11. Redhaw fruits are eaten raw or made into jellies and pies (Interview with Dani Tippman and Mary (Strack) Swenda, 2005).
12. Day-lily flowers, flower buds or petals are fried and eaten. Buds eaten raw as a snack (Interview with Dani Tippman and Mary (Strack) Swenda, 2005).

13. Wild plum tree fruits are pitted, cooked and eaten. "they're tart, so add extra sugar". For harvesting fruits, put down a tablecloth first and shake the tree (Interview with Dani Tippman & Mary (Strack) Swenda, 2005).

14. Oak acorns are harvested and eaten or made into soup by Charles Lewis Strack, Mary's father, Miami. "When acorns fall off the trees then they are ready to eat. Peel off the brown covering and eat the insides" (Interview with Mary (Strack) Swenda, 2005).

Phyllis Miley

1. Sweet Flag root is chewed for coughs, "My dad made me eat the root and I didn't like it" (Interview with Phyllis Miley, 2003)

2. Common milkweed—the center, tender leaves and shoot part, of the top of the plant [possibly the new flower buds] and cook it." She also indicated that when the pods were small, you can take out the insides [immature floss] and cook it for eating (2003);

3. Pine tree sap spread on bottom to heal saddle soreness. Scott Shoemaker's great grandfather (by marriage) Camillus Bundy, taught Scott's grandfather, Frances Shoemaker (Phyllis' Miley's father) to ride horses and other wilderness skills horseback trips into the woods for a few days. His grandfather got a sore bottom and his great grandfather told him to smear pine sap on it, and the soreness got better. His grandfather had said, "It made it [his bottom] sticky but it made it better". sap good for starting fires; (Interview with Scott Shoemaker and Phyllis Miley, 2003)

4. Cattails—Collected in August, when leaves are longer, collect green (Interview with Gary and Scott Shoemaker, and Phyllis Miley, 2003);

5. Slippery Elm—used for something (Interview with Phyllis Miley, 2003)