



GINSENG FAMILY (*Araliaceae*)

Devil's Club (*Oplopanax horridus*)

wo'oms (Sm'algyax Dictionary 2001, p. 77)



Devil's club (*Oplopanax horridus*)



Devil's club (*Oplopanax horridus*)

This large-leaved, spiny-stemmed shrub is very common throughout Gitga'at territory, especially along streams and watercourses. It is an extremely and powerfully important medicinal and ritual plant for the Coastal peoples. The bark is used for ritual purification, cleansing of fishing gear, and as a good luck charm. It is also applied to wounds. The berries are used to treat sores. The leaves are pounded to make a poultice for arthritis. According to the Port Simpson Curriculum Committee (1983, pp. 94–96), devil's club is usually harvested in spring and early summer, the prickly outer bark is shaved off, and thin shavings of the greenish inner bark are soaked in water for six to eight hours. The solution is then strained and jarred. This solution is used as a hair shampoo, to prevent lice and dandruff; as a bathing solution by men who were hunting or fishing, to mask the human scent; and as an emetic, purifier, and general medicine. Some people take it to treat diabetes, and others for cancer. Ian Eaton prepares this medicine by cleaning off the spines and scraping off the brownish outer skin, then peeling the green inner bark off, cutting it into strips, and placing it in zip-lock bags to be stored in the freezer until needed. He uses leather gloves to handle the prickly stems before the spines are removed.

Helen Clifton called this plant, "the real Indian medicine." She said, it's good "for everything" and is used for luck as well. Tina Robinson and Belle Eaton said it is used to bring luck in fishing — you can rub it on fishing gear; other Tsimshian elders knew about this as well. You can leave the cleaned sticks around your house to protect yourself from bad luck. Some people make a tea from the inner bark on a regular basis. Helen described the preparation: You try to gather the stalks in the spring, before the plants produce flowers or berries. You take only four stalks of devil's club at any one time, and scrape the spines off, removing the outer bark away. Then you peel off the inner bark and dry it for winter.

Helen said that today many people take a potato peeler to peel off the green inner bark. Then, fill a medium-sized zip-lock bag with the "peelings" and put it in the freezer. Keep these bags tightly closed container as the odour will be absorbed by other foods. Take out as required. To make the medicine, you take half a bag full to make a 1-gallon jar of medicine. You pour boiling water over it and let it steep, like a tea, rather than boiling it. Sometimes licorice fern (*ts'üga'uam*) is used with it, as a sweetener. You drink the solution as a beverage. Another way to make this medicine is to dry the "peelings" in a



paper bag, hanging it up in a dry place and turning it over every now and then to ensure that all of it dries. The bag “breathes” and allows the medicine to dry thoroughly. They make tea from it and drink it all the time as a beverage. Some people drink a glass of devil’s club tea daily for several months as a way of reducing blood sugar. Some people also use this medicine to treat lupus. For arthritis, people soak the devil’s club peeled sticks or shavings in the bathtub and bathe in the solution. (Helen added that one should only take as much as you need of any kind of medicine.) Helen’s mother-in-law, Lucille Clifton, made devil’s club medicine for her when she had TB; She mixed it with *ts’üga’aam* and another plant. [The Sm’algyax Dictionary (2001, p. 77) notes that a tonic is made from the inner bark and it is also used for arthritis.] Belle Eaton said that some people mix devil’s club with yew for medicine.

Tina told about a time when a baby had eaten green salmonberries and was completely constipated. They powdered the dried inner bark of *wo’oms* and mixed a little bit with warm water and used it as an enema. In the afternoon, the baby’s bowels moved.

Warning: Devil’s club is a powerful medicine that affects the body in different ways. Never try to use it without experience, or without the advice and care of an herbal medicine specialist or physician.



Devil’s club, peeled inner bark
(*Oplopanax horridus*)

STUDENT REPORT

By Christopher Stewart (grade 11) and
Jarvis Smith (grade 11)



Sm’algyax name: **wo’oms**
Common name: **devil’s club**
Botanical name: ***Oplopanax horridus***

How is it used?

As a medicine: Devil’s club is used as a medicine. It kept Chief Johnny Clifton’s sugar down (diabetes). You really have to believe in it. Some people bathe in it to wash away the bad luck. It’s also good for getting rid of bugs.

How is it harvested?

Natives only took four at a time. You have to cut the leaves off then scrape off the thorns. When you pick you have to be happy — that way your mind is clear. People need to stay focused and happy while they are picking. When you’re done with the devil’s club, you put it back on the ground. It brings good luck.

When is it harvested?

The spring is the best time to pick it.

Useful plants of the Ts'msyen people Paragraph Assignment Sentence Outline Example - Using Stinging Nettle

Topic sentence-

While there are many useful plants used by the Ts'msyen people one of the most interesting is Stinging Nettle.

Sentence #1

Stinging Nettle is called Steti in Sm'algyax.

Sentence #2

Some characteristics of this plant that help us identify it are that the leaves are coarsely toothed, pointed on the ends and can be several inches long.

Sentence #3

It is usually located in areas with nitrogen rich soil, such as bottom land along rivers and streams, and some prefer the shade of the forest.

Sentence #4

It is usually harvested for eating in the early spring when the young shoots are less than a foot tall and still have a purple tinge to the leaves, but it can be harvested at any time when the nettles are being used to make fibre.

Sentence #5-

Some things you need to remember about harvesting this plant are that the leaves and stem have stinging hairs that contain formic acid which can cause a stinging reaction when they come in contact with the skin, so you need to be careful, take your time and get help from a knowledge keeper before harvesting.

Sentence #6

Stinging Nettle was very important to the Ts'msyen people, and they used it in many ways such as food and for making things they needed.

Sentence #7

One thing they used it for was using the young shoots as a vegetable food source which was important because fresh vegetables and fruits are not very plentiful in early spring, and this gave them fresh food source.

Sentence #8

Other uses of Stinging Nettle were making rope, clothing and nets from the strong fibre as well as making tea from the dried leaves which was important because it was useful for many different things that helped people survive.

Conclusion sentence

So, as you can see Stinging Nettle was significant to the Ts'msyen people due to its many useful characteristics.

Good copy of paragraph- Example

While there are many useful plants used by the Ts'msyen people one of the most interesting is Stinging Nettle. Stinging Nettle is called Steti in Sm'algyax. Some characteristics of this plant that help us identify it are that the leaves are coarsely toothed, pointed on the ends and can be several inches long. It is usually located in areas with nitrogen rich soil, such as bottom land along rivers and streams, and some prefer the shade of the forest. It is usually harvested for eating in the early spring when the young shoots are less than a foot tall and still have a purple tinge to the leaves but it can be harvested at any time when the nettles are being used to make fibre. Some things you need to remember about harvesting this plant are that the leaves and stem have stinging hairs that contain formic acid which can cause a stinging reaction when they come in contact with the skin, so you need to be careful, take your time and get help from a knowledge keeper before harvesting. Stinging Nettle was very important to the Ts'msyen people, and they used it in many ways such as food and for making things they needed. One thing they used it for was using the young shoots as a vegetable food source which was important because fresh vegetables and fruits are not very plentiful in early spring, and this gave them fresh food source. Other uses of Stinging Nettle were making rope, clothing and nets from the strong fibre as well as making tea from the dried leaves which was important because it was useful for many different things that helped people survive. So, as you can see Stinging Nettle was significant to the Ts'msyen people due to its many useful characteristics.

Useful plants of the Ts'msyen people Paragraph Assignment Name: EXAMPLE

Rough draft (sentence outline) Example- Filled in for Stinging Nettle

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Sentence #6

Stinging Nettle was very important to the Ts'msyen people, and they used it in many ways such as food and for making things they needed.

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One thing they used it for was using the young shoots as a vegetable food source which was important because fresh vegetables and fruits are not very plentiful in early spring, and this gave them fresh food source.

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Conclusion sentence

So, as you can see Stinging Nettle was significant to the Ts'msyen people due to it many useful characteristics.

Notes for fill in paragraph on plant paragraph (use this information to fill in your sentence outline of paragraph

What are you going to be trying to prove in your paragraph about the plant you chose? (main point- Topic sentence)

What type of plant are you writing about?

What is this plant called in Sm'algyax?

What are some characteristics of this plant that help us identify it?

Where is this plant usually located?

When is it usually harvested?

What are important things/protocols you need to remember about harvesting this plant?

Why was your plant important to the Ts'msyen people?

What was one thing they used this plant and why was it important?

What are some other uses of this plant by the Ts'msyen and why was it important?

What have you proven in your paragraph? (repeat main point- Conclusion sentence)