



**Shoulder Season Income Opps with  
Non-Timber Forest Products  
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# Non-Timber Forest Products?

- Plants, animals, minerals and other biological organisms that people have gathered and used to maintain life and livelihood in the boreal and cold temperate forest regions since the first people inhabited this region.
- Every culture of all nationalities throughout the circumpolar region gathered and used ***non-timber forest products***.
- NTFP's are other than derived from cutting and processing trees into milled and manufactured products including lumber, cabin logs, pulp, chemicals, etc.
- Much emphasis has previously focused on tropical forest NTFP's and the indigenous peoples that still use them as a major part of their living and culture.

# A broad definition of NTFPs:

those biological organisms, excluding timber, valued by humans for both consumptive and non-consumptive purposes found in various forms within the forested landscape.



# Non-Timber Forest Products termed **NTFPs** are listed nationwide in part as:

- Floral greens: floral arrangements, princess pine, moss & lichens, cattail tops, etc.
- Christmas ornaments: boughs & branches, wreaths, cones, Christmas trees, etc.
- Wild edibles: nuts, fruits, blue berries, leaves: spruce tip tea, mushrooms, chaga tea, devils club root, birch sap & syrup, fiddleheads, spices (sage), spruce gum, cattail root, wild rice, high & low bush berries, straw & raspberries, dandelion greens,
- Medicinal: chaga, devils club root, yarrow, Labrador tea, rose hip tea, birch sap, elixirs, extracts & tinctures, etc.
- Transplants: wild shrubs, ground cover, ferns, flowers, landscaping, etc.
- Crafts: birch bark, birch sticks, birch sections, wood cookies, hiking sticks, twig wreaths, buttons, rings, basket materials, cones, bird houses & feeders, grasses, willow roots & twigs, artists conk, wintergreen berry & leaf, spruce roots, rose hips, cattail tops & down, alder cones, spruce cones, etc.
- Tools & utensils: wooden spoons, forks, spatulas, bowls, burl products, containers, cutting boards,
- Fur, bone, claw & antler products: hats, gloves, ruffs, muffs, buttons, hair ties, display fur items, jewelry, tools, etc.

NTFPs could be part of a landowners goal of  
“integrated forest management.”



Even small forested acreages  
are more apt to supply a continuous resource of NTFPs than  
only a very occasional harvest of traditional wood products....



Add gathering NTFPs to timber management  
~ prior to logging ~  
to significantly increase the forests overall monetary return.



# Food, health & personal care products from the forest.

- Berries (blue berries, raspberries, rose hips, cranberry, etc.)
- Beverages (teas from rose hips, chaga tea, birch sap, devils club root...)
- Tinctures (chaga tincture, etc.)
- Essential oils ~ soaps ~ fragrances ~ hand creams ~ shampoos
- Herbs & spices
- Honey
- Syrups from sap: birch & maple
  - candy – salad dressing – meat sauces – etc.
- Mushrooms
- Nutraceuticals

# Decorative and Aesthetic Products

- Cone, wreath & floral:
- Bark products
- Carving/woodcrafts



duck calls, animals, spoons, bowls...

- Cordage & dyes  
spruce root, bark dyes...
- Fur/antler products
- Wreath/floral



# Landscape, nursery, floral & yard products.



Another consumptive product of the farm & forest:  
hunter access fees and hunting leases.



# Non-consumptive NTFPs:

## *Recreation*

bird watching, natural history tours, farm tours, camping, cross country skiing, cabins, B&B, etc.



Harvest method makes a difference.  
Consider long term resource sustainability.



Consider *your capacity*,  
time, available resources, interest & desire.



## Research everything to be found on your proposed NTFP.

- Identify your resource and timing to collect, prepare and render to saleable products.
- Find out who is doing it, how and how long to produce.
- Identify tools needed, be economical... start small – determine and stick to a budget. Rent. Lease.
- Consider time to gather and produce – stockpile apropos?
- Marketing: start whole to sale regional buyers; to centralized processors; to exporters.
- Whole sale market research can lead to retail opps. After whole sale AND PU to determine time and timing, consider part for retail. Keep the wholesale market for revenue stream unless full time concentration is intended.

The boreal forest is noted for it's cyclic nature.  
Don't go broke putting all your eggs in one basket.  
Consider the old Sourdough way of seasonal diversification.



# Harvest timing, seasonality and methods.

Product selection must fit with the other the other farm products.



Harvesting from your land or others.  
Fees on state, federal, native land for commercial harvest?  
Harvesting cooperative?



Marketing is critical.

Can you meet demand? Be reasonable.

- Marketing tools: Internet: international opps
- Website: WIX.com Start with Alaska first on the name of the business.
- “Alaska Kindling King” Alaska in the name...
- “Alaska Chaga Choice”
- Farmers market ~ State Fairs ~ Winter Holiday Bazaar – etc.
- Gift shops ~ consignment shops ~ magazine ads ~ business promo’s.

# Advertising is part of marketing.



Obtaining. Processing. Marketing: may become limiting factors as demand exceeds supply.



If the sap doesn't flow or the  
mushrooms ~ berries won't grow...



1. **Be mobile**, able to move to areas of abundance or purchase from a large catchment supply.
2. **Be diverse** able to switch harvest effort from one product to another depending on year.



Successful regional economic development will most probably come from small family businesses that support a network of harvesting those NTFPs that can be harvested year to year.



Utilize a model of production that can sustain buying, processing and marketing capacity able to transform raw material into a stable product with enhanced storage properties and able to smooth out the effect of cyclical NTFP yields.



Harvest sustainably.  
Store effectively. Process promptly.



# Report NC – 217

Forest Communities in the Third Millennium: Linking Research, Business, and Policy  
Toward a Sustainable Non-Timber Forest Product Sector.



# Chaga: a short case study...



The chaga mushroom (*Inonotus obliquus*) grows on birch trees in the Northern Hemisphere.



Chaga grows pre-dominantly on birches. Many “believe” the Chaga mushroom converts betulin into betulinic acid, and many internet sources state Chaga's betulinic acid is bioavailable, even when taken orally. Unfortunately there is no research that confirms this claim.[\[19\]](#)



Chaga conk is irregularly formed and has the appearance of burnt charcoal when found on birch trees.  
Processed chaga conk it is colored a rusty-brownish hue.



Chaga has been used for centuries to make  
a healthy tea that has a pleasant flavor.  
Chaga tea shouldn't taste like mold or dirt.



No birch bark, moss, branches or anything else should be included when processing chaga.



Since chaga is parasitic on birch trees  
it is not known whether harvest is sustainable on the same tree.  
Chaga is most often found on trees in a mature birch forest.



Birch forests are not long-lived. They decline with age living productively a hundred years or a bit more. Birch become largely excluded by mortality in a 150-year-old forest.



Harvest chaga using a hand saw, pole saw, hammer & chisel or hand axe. Avoid using a chainsaw which will taint the fungus.



Transport in a clean container (no contaminants)  
dry it in a cool, dry location until thoroughly dry.



Process immediately  
and store in an air tight container.



# Birch Bark Products



# Baskets, back packs, shoes...



# Lamp shades & furniture



Harvesting birch bark  
does not kill the tree.



Harvest in May or June  
especially when the wild rose is blooming.



Choose bark that is free of branches & branch scars.  
Cut from top to bottom lightly only about 1/8<sup>th</sup> inch deep.



The bark will slip this time of year.



Store it flat or roll it from top to bottom  
and tie with a string.



# Gather only as much as needed.



# Pole furniture



# Store and process as needed.



Market on-line, bazars,  
gift stores, furniture outlets...



at fairs, farmers markets etc.



# Questions? Comments. Ideas!





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