



Treasures of the Medicine Woods Quest

Mt. Kearsarge Indian Museum, Warner, NH

Created by Campers at the 2006 Turtle Island Summer Day Camp, under the direction of Ruth Smith, Rachel Christensen and Rosie Parsons.

Difficulty: Easy

Walking Conditions: Paths

Type of Quest: Historic and natural. This Quest is at the Museum. The hours of operation for the Museum are as follows: From May 1 through Oct. 31, open seven days a week. Monday -- Saturday from 10 –5; Sunday from 12 – 5. November through the weekend before Christmas, the museum is open on weekends only.

To get there:

I-89 south, exit 9. Proceed to the Village of Warner and take a left on Kearsarge Mountain Road.

Quest Overview

The Medicine Woods Trail winds through a patch of central New Hampshire forest, which was the dump for the old farm, that was once here. Coils of barbed wire, a refrigerator, rope, tires, broken glass and many other items used to litter this area. It has been reclaimed and now supports over 100 native and planted species. Designed as a teaching area and tranquility zone we ask that you respect this place. Please do not pick any of the plants or disturb the wildlife in any way.

This quest is designed to help you enjoy and learn about some of the plants that are growing in the Medicine Woods. Many of the species represented here were used traditionally by Native Americans for food, medicine, tools and structures. If you like this quest, you may want to try the one in the museum as well. Have fun!

Special Note:

None of the descriptions of plant uses provided here are complete enough for you to practice the traditional use of the plant. If you are interested in learning more about uses of the plant, please see our gift shop for resources. Eating wild plants without adequate knowledge of what, when and how to do it can be extremely harmful to your health.

Begin your quest at the circle of stones just inside the Medicine Woods trailhead.

Clues:

The Medicine Woods begins around
A circle of rocks placed on the ground.
The important circle brings us together
As a symbol that goes on forever.
I'm not human, but I have a face

I'm here to tell you about this place.
In the woods, herbs Native would use
Please have fun and be amused!

I have five needles in a cluster,
I just can't make it six; it's all I can muster
For dugout canoes I was used a lot
My needles make a tea, you drink it hot
(Find a white pine and examine its needles)

Now proceed to find a sign
That's near a tree we call red pine.
I have bark that looks like puzzle pieces
Look at the cracks, bumps and creases.
This bark was steamed and helped to cure
Aches in back and heads for sure.

I'm not a tree; I'm not a plant
I have things to tell you, but I can't.
Read me carefully along the way
And hear the things I have to say.

Down the trail a little way
You'll find a plant still used today.
Wild sarsaparilla cures stomachaches
Tea from its roots is all it takes.

Take a left to a short dead end
There you'll find a tulip tree friend.
They're originally found in a southern land
But his one was planted by our founder's hand.

Back to the trail you'll surely meet
Some black birch saplings that taste sweet
They smell a little like root beer
But don't attract the white-tailed deer.

Now look ahead, seek and find
An oak and maple that are intertwined
Destiny brought them together
Will they be like that forever?

Continue left and you will see
The moose's favorite kind of tree
A striped maple has leaves real neat
Each one is shaped just like goosefeet.

Tea from the inner bark, we're told
Was used to heal bronchitis and colds.

Now head to the river that is often bare
Look for the ferns that are so fair
Please treat them with special care
Don't make these nice ferns rare.

Act like a squirrel and look for me
I am the giant red oak tree
Chipmunks and squirrels eat my acorns, true
When ground and soaked, humans can too.

Headache, stomachache, nausea, indigestion
Bracken fern was the cure, without question
And it was used for much, much more
Too bad you can't buy it in a store.

This tiny man made of stone
The path for people is clearly shown.
Now look for the sweetest kind of tree
A special treat is made from me.

My sap when raw is not so great.
A lot of boiling is what it takes
Native Americans knew the way
Maple syrup, we still use today!

Quick shelters for the weary
Keep the rain out when it's dreary
Looking up from where you stand
My needles are soft to the touch of your hand
Acidic needles boiled to a tea
Helped people with a lack of vitamin C.

Take a moment to enjoy the view
Then continue to seek something new
'Neath some hemlock, on the earth
Partridgeberry helped with childbirth.

Now come along and look for me,
I am an American beech tree
I am not soft like sand
But the touch of my bark won't hurt your hand.

Now travel to the bend in the trail

And we'll tell you a funny little tale.
A children's rhyme
May save you time
In learning my name
 Alice Algae and Freddy Fungus
 Took a "lichen" to each other
Now let's play a game.

Look up and down and all around
On trees and rocks, not on the ground
See if you can find me
Stuck, look for lichen on the tree!

Where the woods meet the field is not the end.
If you keep going, you'll see, my friend.
There are more herbs and other trees too.
If you continue, I'll show them to you.

Off in the distance, you'll see a tipi
It is not near to you and me.
The Native Americans made it tall
To stand up straight and never fall.

Look up the hill and you will see
A very useful kind of tree
The bark was used as nature's Band Aid
Basswood ropes, mats and nets were also made.

Although it may look empty to you,
Tiny creatures live here too
Beneath your feet and in the ground
The homes of Ant People can be found.

I am growing by the fence
Natives used me as incense
Please don't pick me off the ground
Because sweet grass, in our gift store, can be found.

I used to make a boundary for gardens and livestock
Look to your right, I'm made of big and small rock.
Miles of walls tell an old farming story
While stone tools from Natives give hint to their glory.

Look back toward the fence and this time you'll spy
A plant that grows thick and up toward the sky.
Jerusalem artichoke is a plant that is great

The Natives dug up the tuber and ate.
The stalk also feels a bit fuzzy & furry
For people with diabetes, it eases their worries.

In marshes I am usually found
I have tasty roots
Way underground
My leaves and sap
Are yummy treats
The fuzz from my brown fruit
Warmed Indian feet.

I'm called sweet fern, but I'm really a shrub
My leaves are quite fragrant, just give me a rub.

Now turn past the yucca, re-enter the wood
A left turn will take you back where it should
Along up the hill you now must go
To look for a tree with bark as white as the snow.

I'm a paper birch, when dry I curl up
I'm used for fires, splints, containers and cups!
My twigs are used for a yummy tea
Boiled bark for wounds, help you and me.

Now find a plant you'd avoid in a flash
If you touch me, I'll give you a rash
I can be burned to make poison smoke
But I'm not a tree; I'm ivy, not oak.

Continue your journey to where you began
Search for a plant give the ground a good scan.
Wintergreen makes a tea that you can take
As a cure for a simple headache
My leaves have a waxy coat, I grown down at your feet
I taste really yummy, but please do not eat.

This is the end of your Medicine Quest
It is almost time to take a rest
You have one more task to complete
To find the treasure, is a test and a feat.

Apart from the circle a big rock does stand
Behind it a smaller one, laid down on the sand.
If you're able to budge one of these then you've found
Your journeys complete, come full circle around