



Wildcrafting

As defined by the NOP

On May 9, 2011 the NOP released a guidance document on Wild Crop Harvesting. This guidance document clarifies what can and cannot be considered a "Wild Crop". You can find the full document on the NOP website under Section A-8 of the NOP Program Handbook. (<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop>)

Wildcrafting is the act of gathering plants or fungi in their native habitat; a Wild Crop is the actual material harvested; (e.g., leaves, berries, shoots, fruiting bodies).

While the definition of "wild crop" and the wild crop harvesting practice standard 205.207 in the NOP rule are very broad, the May 9th guidance document to certifiers is much more prescriptive of what can be considered a "wild crop" and what we as your certifier need to verify.

Firstly, to be eligible as a wild crop the species may be terrestrial or aquatic and must be fixed to a defined location by a species part. A species part being defined as a root, holdfast, mycelial thread etc.

Secondly, only minimal agricultural practices may be employed. By minimal the NOP lists re-seeding, pruning and removal of non-native species from the habitat. Management practices that go beyond these are indicators of crop production and the crop production standards for soil fertility and crop nutrient management practices (205.203), Crop rotation (205.205) and Pest, weed and disease control standards (205.206) must be implemented.

The guidance document lists the components of wild crop harvesting that need to be made a part of the Organic System Plan (your annual update/application). These include:

1. Map of the harvest area showing boundaries, borders, buffer zones if necessary and any point or non-point sources of contamination

2. Field History and Landowner Affidavit that the area has been free of prohibited materials for 3 years
3. You must have permission to collect on land that you do not own
4. Description of the natural environment (e.g. hardwood forest)
5. Proposed ecosystem management and harvesting practices
6. Statement of the impact of harvesting on the long-term viability of the wild crop
7. Information on any equipment used to manage or harvest the wild crop and ecosystem
8. What monitoring system will be used to document the sustainable harvest and maintenance of the habitat/ecosystem
9. List of any rare, threatened or endangered species that occur in the harvested area
10. Procedures employed to prevent contamination from adjoining land use
11. Training and monitoring procedures for all collectors of wild crops

We expect organic producers who want to certify their wildcrafted harvests to know their plants and mushrooms. There are toxic plants and mushrooms in Maine and these must not be mistaken for edible ones. If the State passes laws regulating wild mushroom collecting, certified organic wildcrafters must be in compliance with these laws. As a general rule, the majority of a population must not be harvested. The actual percentage of what is left behind - untouched - will vary by species. You must do your research and justify the percentage you plan to take. If you collect on public, state or federally owned lands, you must get a permit or written permission. Avoid collecting plants from areas with heavy use, such as along a popular dog walking path.

