



MÉTIS URBAN PLANT HARVESTING GUIDE



OVERVIEW

Harvesting is a deep-rooted tradition amongst Métis people. While many Métis harvesting activities take place in rural areas, it's important to recognize traditional plant harvesting is also practiced in urban settings such as city parks, green spaces, and river valleys. In a recent survey, the Métis community in Alberta indicated plant harvesting is important to their physical health and community well-being. However, many respondents indicated concerns about pesticide use, and if, when, and where they could safely and legally harvest traditional plants within urban boundaries.

Some urban harvesters gather plants in cities where their ancestors collected the same types of flora. Traditional plants harvested in cities by Métis citizens are often used as medicines and for food. Plant harvesting is an important intergenerational and relationship building activity, as many harvesters pick with family members, passing down knowledge to younger generations and sharing the bounty with family, friends, and community. Keeping in mind our relationships to the land and plants, please only take what you need and do so carefully when harvesting.

PESTICIDES

Although all municipalities fall under provincial legislation for pesticide management and must only use federally-legislated pesticides labeled safe for use in cities, there is variation in usage. While some cities in Alberta have pesticide-free zones, it is difficult to know if any area is actually pesticide-free without regularly checking with the municipality.

This guide identifies how some cities in Alberta use pesticides, where pesticide-free areas exist, and signage used to indicate pesticide use. For information on pesticide use in your area, contact your municipality directly.

BYLAWS

According to many bylaws, harvesting plants in city parks is prohibited; however, municipalities differ in applying these bylaws. All municipalities allow berry harvesting, specifically, if it occurs along paths and does not damage plants.

Of the cities contacted, only St. Albert does not have a specific bylaw prohibiting plant harvesting. Edmonton allows non-commercial harvesting, recognizing the need to better understand Métis and other Indigenous harvesting practices in the formulation of future bylaws. Please note many cities require some type of permitting in order to carry out plant harvesting in parks and natural spaces.



**THE FLOWERS AND
PLANTS ALWAYS
BRING US BACK TO
OUR CONNECTION
TO THE LAND AND
THE MEDICINES AND
TEACHINGS THEY
GIVE US TELL US HOW
TO LIVE ON MOTHER
EARTH.**

-Cristi Belcourt



PESTICIDE USE & HARVESTING BYLAWS BY MUNICIPALITY

CALGARY 4

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PESTICIDE USE



REGULAR
PESTICIDE USE



NOXIOUS
WEEDS ONLY



PESTICIDE-FREE
AREAS



SIGNAGE
POSTED

HARVESTING BYLAWS



HARVESTING
ALLOWED



PERMIT
REQUIRED



CONTACT
INFORMATION



ADDITIONAL
NOTES

CALGARY



No formal pest control
guidelines in place



Harvesting permit
required



No formal noxious weed
control guidelines in place



311 or
403-268-2489



30 meter buffers around
bodies of water



Parks department
recommends obtaining
an open permit at the
beginning of the season



Perimeter signs posted in
parking lots of parks

EDMONTON



Premier locations

Golf courses, bowling greens, athletic facilities, sports fields, cemeteries, and parks used for high profile events



Non-commercial harvesting is allowed and does not require a permit. Commercial harvesting is considered a violation.



Non-premier locations

Parks and river valley parks



311 or 780-442-5311
treebugs@edmonton.ca
invasiveweeds@edmonton.ca



None listed



The City of Edmonton expressed the need to better educate themselves regarding harvesting rights, especially as they link to Indigenous rights.



Public notice of pesticide programs are available at edmonton.ca

LETHBRIDGE



City parks



Harvesting permit required



City parks



311 or 403-320-3111



Natural areas, along rivers, native grass areas



Harvesters can request permission annually, detailing what will be harvested, why, and what techniques are used.



Signage posted for two days in area of spraying

RED DEER



Performance sports fields, arterial roadways, mulched tree wells, shrub beds, concrete, aggregate, asphalt



Harvesting permit required



403-342-8234
parks@reddeer.ca



Broadleaf sprays for thistle in natural vegetation sites – residual effect for approx. two years



The city must be informed of when and where harvesting occurs



30 meters from the river valley, play structures, schools, and Maskepetoon park



Signage posted for two days in area of spraying



ST. ALBERT



Turf in city parks, many listed weeds are under mowing and trimming regimes and herbicide treatments may be used on follow up



Forest and wetland spot applications for noxious weeds – no spraying in natural areas

Regulated weeds in natural areas possibly treated with chemicals:

- Common Burdock
- Creeping/Canada Thistle
- Common Tansey
- Field Scabious



Open dog parks, near playgrounds, active sports fields, and near medically exempted residents



Notices posted in park areas, including contact number, pesticide(s) used, and other details

No signage is used for Roundup on bare ground, ditch, and field applications



Harvesting on public land is allowed as long as trees are not damaged or destroyed



780-459-1557



Healing Gardens and Founders Walk – Indigenous parks with sweetgrass, sage, fruit trees and rhubarb

Harvesting encouraged:

- sweetgrass
- sage
- berries
- horseradish
- rhubarb
- crab-apples
- willow
- highbush cranberry
(for traditional pipes & drumstick construction)

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Information researched and compiled by the MNA Environment Team and Sarah De Lano through a partnership with the University of Alberta and the Sustainability Scholars Program.
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CONTACT US!

For more information about
Métis plant and berry harvesting
in Alberta, call us at

780-455-2200

or email

environment@metis.org



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