



7-24-2015

Urban Foraging Social Meetups in Philadelphia, PA

Kristin G. McGillis

Ursinus College, krmcgillis@ursinus.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/environment_sum

 Part of the [Environmental Education Commons](#), and the [Urban Studies and Planning Commons](#)

Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

McGillis, Kristin G., "Urban Foraging Social Meetups in Philadelphia, PA" (2015). *Environmental Studies Summer Fellows*. 1.
https://digitalcommons.ursinus.edu/environment_sum/1

This Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research at Digital Commons @ Ursinus College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Environmental Studies Summer Fellows by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Ursinus College. For more information, please contact aprock@ursinus.edu.

“Expanding my knowledge of what’s around me”: Urban Foraging Social Meetups in Philadelphia, PA

By Kristin McGillis, Summer Fellows Research Paper

Mentor: Dr. Patrick T. Hurley

INTRODUCTION

There is increasing awareness among scholars of the ways in which residents interact with nature in the city, including the ways that urban foraging provides these residents with natural resources and brings them closer to nature. Urban foraging is a practice through which city residents gather plants and plant parts from green spaces in the city—such as parks, sidewalks, or yards—to use for a variety of reasons including edible, medicinal, and craft-related purposes. Through this process, these individuals develop an awareness of urban ecosystems and their plant species. Foragers are thought of as a community of practice—a group of people with a common interest who engage that interest together.

Past research on urban foraging has focused largely on how and why foragers choose to participate in harvesting plants and their parts. Residents may forage any number of parts, including the leaves, seeds, blossoms, stems, berries, bark, flowers, and roots as well as at times the entire plant. Research has shown that the most common and abundant areas from which foragers gather materials are city and state parks, private yards, institutional campuses, from street trees, and along the streets. At the same time, this research has highlighted the tendency of city officials to discourage urban foraging when in fact it is a sustainable and healthy practice for both the city itself and the individuals participating.

To date, there has been less attention paid to so-called foraging social meetups—or tours open to anyone interested in hands on learning about how to forage. To the extent that tours have been previously included in research, they appear to include elements have the potential to help newcomers and longtime practitioners, alike, develop familiarity with specific plants and their uses. Yet, it is still unclear how these tours, as dynamic and important community interactions and sites of knowledge exchange, function to foster the growth of this community of practice. To address this gap in the literature, this paper examines the question: how do foraging meetups serve as entryways into this thriving community of practice?

Drawing on ethnographic methods, this paper explores how social foraging meetups work to encourage and facilitate this community of practice. In doing so, I use participant observation to analyze the ways that foraging meetups function, which types of species are encountered and which uses are priorities, what other types of information are shared, and who seeks out this information. I use in-depth interviewing to better understand the more detailed individual dimensions of practice, such as what species are collected by tour participants, how these species are used, how personal experience ties in with the motivation for attending tours, what participants hope to get out of their participations in these tours, and what concerns foragers have. I also analyze two past years of meetups on a social foraging website to determine if the tours I observed were representative of the broad picture of foraging tours. This also helped give me further insight into which types of learning are emphasized more than others on the meetups. These data provide a deeper understanding of who attends these tours, why they attend them, what kinds of information are being shared, and what locations are most valuable to allowing these tours to be successful.

Using these methods, I show that foraging meetup tours attract a range of different people depending on what is being emphasized on the tour, whether it be edible uses, medicinal uses,

collaborative learning, or expert-led learning. These various tour dynamics serve as a way to give each forager the type of information they are seeking. The paper begins by examining what past research has learned about the foraging community and how that information helped to shape my project's emphasis. I then move into an explanation of the various methods I used to gather data—including participant observation, interviews, and analyzing past meetups—and what advantages each of these methods has for my research question. Next, I present my results from each different component of my methods, along with tables and figures to help illustrate my data. Then, I discuss what these results mean for the foraging community of practice and what implications they have for future research. Finally, I conclude the paper with definitive statements about what my research has shown to be true for the community of practice of urban foragers in Philadelphia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Past research has identified ways in which people connect to and benefit from nature in the city through urban foraging. "Foraging refers to the harvesting, gathering, or collection of [non-timber forest products]...such as wild berries, herbaceous weeds, edible mushrooms, blades or perennial grasses, and fallen branches [which] contribute significantly to the lives of many urban residents" (Hurley, 2015; p. 188). These products can be found in a variety of places throughout a city: in city or state parks, in vacant lots, in back or front yards of homes, in alleyways, along sidewalks and streets, among other places. These goods that people gather "have significant value for individual collectors that policy makers, urban land managers, and even the general public have mostly overlooked" (Jahnige, 2001). Most people are unaware that the plants they see as troublesome weeds along the street or may be growing next to their house are, in fact, valuable products that can be used in a variety of ways such as for food, medicine, or craft, among others (Hurley, 2015).

There is no one single "type" of person who engages in urban foraging, but rather "gatherers are a diverse and spatially-dispersed group that includes individuals and families, men and women of varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds" (Emery 2002). Scholars of foraging have described foragers as a "community of practice" that engage in a specific activity together—not dissimilar to the ways that communities of bird watchers, for example, spend their time interacting with each other and the environment (Poe 2013). At the same time, as Hurley explains, "foraging practices may also be associated with culturally specific foods, crafts, and groups" (2015; p. 188). While it is true that some people sell what they collect, many people who engage in this practice value the products they gather for various cultural and social benefits outside of the economic realm (Emery 2002). The fact that there is such a broad range of people who participate in urban foraging suggests that it is a practice that can be useful to everyone, and that it is not limited by class, gender, or ethnicity. This allows the benefits gained from foraging to be accessible to anyone wanting or needing them.

There are certain key locations that appear to support this community of practice and the ways these city residents draw upon urban nature to enrich their lives. As Poe (2014) points out, "Cultural identities, connections to place, and environmental practices are embedded in people's everyday relationships with nature, urban, or otherwise" (p. 4). These connections to nature occur in distinct places throughout a city. These spaces—parks in particular—play a major role in facilitating the practice of gathering food and medicine from the wild. As Hurley (2015) states, "out of fifty-nine organized or advertised events...a high number have taken place in city parks, a few at local arboreturns or botanical gardens, several on sections of the regional bike trail system, and a couple at private nature preserves in the suburbs" (p. 200). Similarly, Jahnige (2001) describes several locations that foragers find their bounty, including "street trees, yard trees and plants, vacant lots, open-grown park trees, open-grown trees on institutional properties, roadside and forest edge plants, and closed-canopy forest plants" (p. 99). These locations allow foragers access to the species that provide them with food, medicine, and more.

However, access to key species may often be challenged by city officials. A 2013 article by McLain titled “Gathering ‘wild’ food in the city: rethinking the role of foraging in urban ecosystem planning and management” discusses the idea that urban foraging is a sustainable practice that cities could largely benefit from; however it is something that is often discouraged by city officials and popular opinion. According to McLain (2013), “foraging is a vibrant and ongoing practice among diverse urban residents in the USA. At the same time, as reflected in regulations, planning practices, and attitudes of conservation practitioners, it is conceptualised as out of place in urban landscapes and an activity to be discouraged” (p. 1). As Hurley (2015) supportively points out, “many urban conservation programs imagine parkscapes solely as backdrops for recreational activities, typically prohibiting direct material interactions between humans, flora, and fauna” (p. 189) This suggests that more knowledge and understanding of the foraging culture is needed to help bring it into the mainstream where it can benefit both individual residents and the city as a whole. In another article, “Producing Edible Landscapes in Seattle’s Urban Forest, McLain points to the advantages of foraging: “urban forests [should be seen] as providers of goods as well as services may provide a more solid foundation for achieving urban sustainability than the current “hands off” approach to urban forest management”.

Past research on urban foraging has focused on learning about individual and city practice mainly through interviewing the parties involved. It has identified parks as a key location in facilitating the community of practice, as well as shown that foraging attracts a diverse group of people. There is a good deal of information on where and why people forage and the implications it has on the city, but more information is needed on the dynamics of urban foraging meetup tours, which play a major role in introducing and encouraging the practice of gathering products from urban green spaces.

This paper examines these tours through participant observation and analysis of past tours, while also looking at individual practices through in depth interviews. This focus is intended to gain deeper insight into the detailed dynamics of how foraging meetups function in the community of practice, including who attends them, for what specific reasons, and how this affects the community as a whole. This paper looks at how foraging meetups encourage the community of practice by making foraging—and the knowledge needed to participate—accessible to everyone.

METHODS

During this research project I used ethnographic methods—including participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and document analysis of websites—to better understand and bring light to the urban foraging community of practice. Through participant observation I was able to put myself in the foragers shoes, both observing and experiencing the way that meetup tours function to encourage this practice. It allowed me to get a sense of how foraging tours operate, who attends them, and what types of discussions take place. In-depth interviewing was useful in understanding the specific intricacies of forager’s behaviors and motivations. I was able to ask detailed questions from individuals and then identify patterns between responses, which revealed what foragers focus on and find important. Finally, analyzing a foraging meetup website for two years of past meetups allowed me to get a broader picture of what the meetup world consisted of: large quantities of information such as locations, species emphasized, number and ages of attendees, and meetup themes. Through these methods I was able to gain significant insights into what characterizes the foraging community of practice.

What is a Meetup?

A large part of this project revolved around attending foraging meet-ups to observe this community of practice and gather data about how these events work. A foraging meet-up is effectively a tour or informal hike arranged on the Wild Foodies of Philadelphia website that any interested person is invited to attend. There is a designated location—usually a park trail or designated path within the city—where everyone meets to begin the tour. The tours are usually organized by someone familiar with

wild edible plants who is willing to show up and “lead” the group along the path. Sometimes this means showing people plants and explaining them in details, other times it simply means keeping the group cohesive and collaborative. During the tour, wild plants are identified and some people may choose to bring species home with them. The tours generally last anywhere from 1-3 hours; however, attendees are free to leave whenever they want. These tours serve as a means for people to share and gain knowledge about wild edible plants in a fun and social way.

In the Field: Participant Observation of Meetups

Fieldwork for this project consisted of attending Wild Foodies meet-up tours in Philadelphia, and observing, participating, and taking detailed notes of my experiences and observations on these tours. I would arrive at the meet-up, introduce myself and explain my research project, and then begin taking notes on my phone about details such as the number of people in attendance and their experience levels (based on comments they made or conversations I had with them), the species found along the path, the uses of these plants that were introduced to or discussed among the group, other topics of conversations that arose (e.g., issues around species identification, minimizing exposure to toxics, ways of processing or using the plants), and the general focus of the tour. In the process of our hike, I would briefly talk to people about their reasons for coming on the tour and their experience with foraging, and if they were willing, I would get their contact information to complete a formal, full-length phone interview later on. One strength of attending these informal meet-ups was being able to experience firsthand what topics were discussed and how people responded to them. Insights and motivations shared with me by participants were used to help guide subsequent interview. It was also a valuable opportunity to get a general overview of the types of people who attend these tours, and how the dynamic of the tour is dependent upon the group makeup. The goal of this fieldwork was to experience and interpret the meet-up tours myself, as well as learn from other foragers about their interpretations of the tours and of foraging in the city. In one case, I was unable to attend a meet-up. In this case, my mentor Dr. Patrick Hurley replicated this process, sharing his field notes, including contact information for potential interviews, with me.

Interviews

Participant observation was a useful first step; however, this information was insufficient for me to truly understand the diverse motivations of new and long-time foragers within this community of practice. This included the reasons that these different types of people had decided to participate in a particular meet-up specifically and in this activity more generally. To further address these gaps, I conducted interviews with foragers I had met on the Wild Foodies tours. My goal was to find out more detailed information about people’s foraging experiences and habits. This data helped give a much more robust and nuanced understanding of why people attended tours and what they got out of them. Interviews were conducted over the phone and recorded for later transcription.

Interview participants were selected from the groups of people that I met on Wild Foodies foraging tours (and by my mentor in one case). Individuals were chosen to represent both newcomer and long-time foragers present at foraging events. Each interview lasted anywhere from 25-55 minutes and employed a semi-structured interview protocol that covered topics, such as the names and quantity of species collected, how often individuals forage, where individuals harvest, the benefits individuals indicated they got from participating in foraging tours, safety concerns while foraging, experience/comfort level, knowledge of legality, and how the individuals learn about foraging. The interview protocol drew on a larger study of foraging in the area, with emphasis placed on discussions of on forager’s perceptions of the benefits gained from foraging tours, as well as their motivations for participating in urban foraging. All interviews were transcribed and coded for major themes that were

congruent throughout the interviews, as well as information such as species, part used, products made, and location of harvest.

Past Meetup Analysis

To gather additional information about Wild Foodie's previous meet-ups, I conducted an analysis of past meet-up events. To do so, I logged onto their website where they list all of their previous meet-ups and navigated around to find the information I needed. I collected data such as the event name, date, theme (if applicable), species collected on the meet-up, uses for those species, specific location as well as location type (i.e., park, garden, backyard, etc.), number of participants, ages of participants, and whether there was a fee or not. Most of this information is mentioned in a paragraph that is posted on the website by the meet-up organizer. The other information, such as number and ages of participants, was found by looking at the number of people who RSVP'd to the event, and then going to their personal profiles and determining their age based on their appearance in their profile picture. If there were any pictures posted from the event, I used these as visual aids in determining the number and ages of participants. After gathering this data, I organized it into an easily accessible table for later analysis.

RESULTS

Learning to Locate Useful Species in Philadelphia: Participant Observation

After collectively attending four foraging meetup tours, I analyzed the dynamics and patterns of these tours, focusing on the make-up of the group, the topics discussed on the tour, the types of species and uses specifically considered, and other elements as needed. On the first meet-up at Cobb's Creek Park just inside the City across the border from Upper Darby, there were 12 people including myself—5 men and 7 women. About half of this group was between the ages of 20-40, while the other half was somewhere in the 40-60 age range. At least 7 of these people were new to foraging, and the other 5 had some experience with it. Topics discussed included: how to identify and use a species for food, not picking plants too close to the street, advantages of young plants over mature plants, thoroughly washing plants, and online identification of plants. There was no mention of concerns about legality or all the trash that was surrounding the trail or extensive discussions on how to use a plant medicinally; however there was a comment about how to use plantain for bug bites. At this tour only the organizer was actually harvesting species to take home with her; everyone else was just touching, smelling, and occasionally tasting a plant. There were 17 species encountered: Mulberry, Stinging nettle, Curly dock, Mugwort, Plantain, Lady's thumb, Garlic mustard, Wood sorrel, Raspberry, Shiso, Knotweed, Pokeweed, Burdock, Clover, Strawberry, Jewelweed, and Chickweed. The species uses discussed on this tour were mainly food and, to a much lesser extent, medicine. The organizer on this tour explained that she enjoyed bringing people together to share what they know about edible and medicinal plants, but she herself was not an expert on the subject. Based on these dynamics, this tour was characterized as a meetup that facilitated the exchange of knowledge by everyone rather than one where the tour guide was the expert teaching the attendees.

The second meet-up, a tour that began at a different trail in Cobb's Creek Park, had 11 attendees including myself, with 4 people in the 20-40 ages range, and the other 7 people in the 40-60 range. In this group, 6 people were inexperienced foragers (they had been doing it for less than 6 months), and the other 5 were somewhat experienced, having foraged more than 6 months. Discussions at this tour were almost exclusively about how to identify plants. There was no talk of concerns of pollution, medicinal uses, or legality. The organizer on this tour (who was the same woman from the previous tour) was the only one harvesting species. One couple was taking a few leaves of different plants home to further identify them, but they were not harvesting species in the traditional sense. We encountered 14 species: Japanese Knotweed, Jewelweed, Smartweed, Wineberries, Creeping Charlie,

Garlic mustard, Burdock, Mugwort, Arrowheads, Lamb's quarters, Lady's thumb, Sorrel, Spicebush, and Queen Anne's lace. The only species use discussed on this tour was food. These species were useful as food: from small trail snacks of berries and leaves, to components of whole meals and especially hearty salads. The organizer of this tour does not claim to be an expert on the topic of wild foraging: she simply wants to foster people's ability to gather together and exchange knowledge and learn from each other. This fact lent itself to the tour being very collaborative and loosely structured. Like the first tour, this was one in which the guide did not act in a strong instructor role, but rather as a facilitator of information exchange.

The third tour took place along the streets of Center City Philadelphia. There were 13 people at this tour, including myself. Six people were in the 20-40 age range, while the other 7 were in the 40-60 age range. Nine of these people were beginner foragers, while the other four were relatively experienced foragers. This tour, unlike the others so far, was led strongly by the meet-up organizer, who has been very active in organizing wild edibles tours with Wild Foodies for over 5 years. In this case, the organizer walked from street to street telling the meetup attendees what species were as they were encountered, how to identify them, how to use them, and where to find them. The previous two tours had been very collaborative, with each person adding their own knowledge to the collective group. This tour's focus was on how to identify species and how to use them, and there was no conversation that strayed from those topics. No one on this tour was harvesting species to bring home; however, many people were smelling and tasting species as we encountered them. We encountered 26 species: Asiatic day flower, Violet, Strawberry, Plantain, Nettle, Paper mulberry, Watercress, Sage wort, Chameleon, Amaranth, Sal thistle, Lambs quarters, Purslane, Knotgrass, Carpet weed, Crabgrass, Quick weed, Pigweed, Wood sorrel, Honey locust, Hosta, Kousa dogwood, Rose of Sharon, Sedum, Yuka flower, and Oak. The uses for these species were mainly edible, and when we arrived there was even some cooked Amaranth and Sal Thistle to try. There was a discussion on how to properly cook and eat the species we found, and only small mention of using a species as medicine (Plantain for bug bites and rashes).

The fourth and final tour took place in the Liberty Lands section of Philadelphia—also an urban area, but part of a community-managed park. There were 20 people in attendance: 13 in the 20-40 age range, and 7 in the 40-60 range. There were at least 4 beginners, and 3 people with experience of more than a year. One individual proudly described her 40+ years of foraging, while another discussed his multiple decades as a master gardener. Unlike previous tours, which were focused on edible species, this meet-up was organized specifically as medicinal uses event. Still, as species with edible dimensions were introduced and discussed, this information was included but not emphasized. Because of this, conversations revolved around how to find and use species in the city for medicine. At the same time, there was little to no discussion of using field guides to identify plants, nor were the dangers of misidentification explicitly discussed. Likewise, the issue of legality and harvesting was also not discussed. Interestingly, one of the parks weeding coordinators joined the tour, helping to point out species of interest. At no point did this individual speak to this issue or suggest the active harvesting by a few was a problem. At this tour there were 13 species discussed: Crab apples, Yarrow, Day lily, Blue vervain, Pepper, Juniper, Smartweed, Willow, Violet, Mugwort, Mallow, Plantain, and Peach. Medicinal uses of these species ranged from dealing with bug bites and inflammation to uses for cancer. These discussions also included alternative conceptions of thinking about plants as medicine and methods for identifying appropriate plants as medicine, including relying on the "doctrine of ". The guide for the tour was a practicing herbal therapist, who wove stories of particular plants' usage in her treatments of clients.

To summarize, three of the four tours focused on edible species, with one focusing on medicinal uses of these species. Three of the four meet-ups focused on species found in city parks, while the fourth focused on species that are found right in the middle of a city—on sidewalks, in alleys, and from street trees. There were 53 species encountered across all four tours, with Plantain, Knotweed,

Mugwort and Wood Sorrel being the most frequent species encountered at three out of the four tours each (See table 1). Three of the tours emphasized edible species, while one tour focused on medicinal species, and none focused on craft or other uses. There were a total of 56 attendees throughout the four tours combined—29 of these people were in the 20-40 age range, while the 27 others were between 40-60 years old. There were at least 26 beginners and at least 17 more experienced foragers, showing that these meetup tours tended to attract people who were interested in an introduction to foraging. At the same time, however, in the case of the fourth tour, some foragers experienced with edible species harvesting specifically indicated their desire to learn about this distinctive use. At each of the tours the majority of time was spent discussing and exchanging knowledge about edible and medicinal plant species.

Table 1. Species Encountered during Social Meetups. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of tours at which that species was seen and discussed.

1. Knotweed (3)	20. Clover (1)	38. Quick weed (1)
2. Mugwort (3)	21. Crab apples (1)	39. Raspberry (1)
3. Plantain (3)	22. Crabgrass (1)	40. Rose of Sharon (1)
4. Wood sorrel (3)	23. Creeping Charlie (1)	41. Sage wort (1)
5. Burdock (2)	24. Curly dock (1)	42. Sedum (1)
6. Garlic mustard (2)	25. Day lily (1)	43. Shiso (1)
7. Jewelweed (2)	26. Hosta (1)	44. Spicebush (1)
8. Lady's thumb (2)	27. Juniper (1)	45. Watercress (1)
9. Lambs quarters (2)	28. Kousa dogwood (1)	46. Willow (1)
10. Nettle (2)	29. Mallow (1)	47. Yarrow (1)
11. Smartweed (2)	30. Mulberry (1)	48. Yuka flower (1)
12. Strawberry (2)	31. Oak (1)	49. Asiatic day flower (1)
13. Violet (2)	32. Paper mulberry (1)	50. Honey locust(1)
14. Amaranth (1)	33. Peach (1)	51. Queen Anne's Lace(1)
15. Arrowheads (1)	34. Pepper (1)	52. Sal thistle(1)
16. Blue vervain (1)	35. Pigweed (1)	53. Wineberries(1)
17. Carpet weed (1)	36. Pokeweed (1)	
18. Chameleon (1)	37. Purslane (1)	
19. Chickweed (1)		

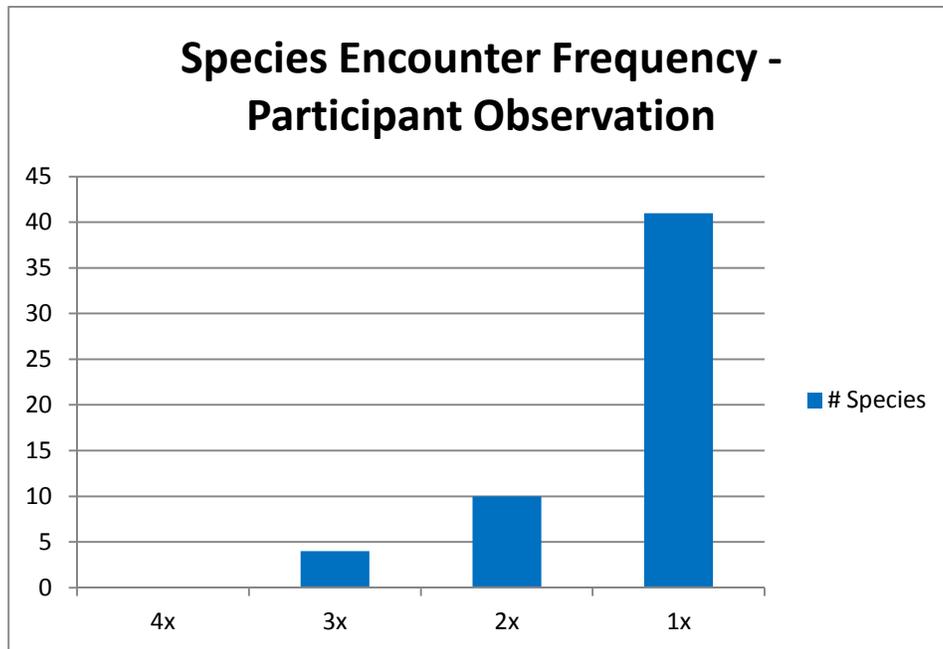


Figure 1. Species by Frequency of Encounter during Participant Observation of Social Meetups.

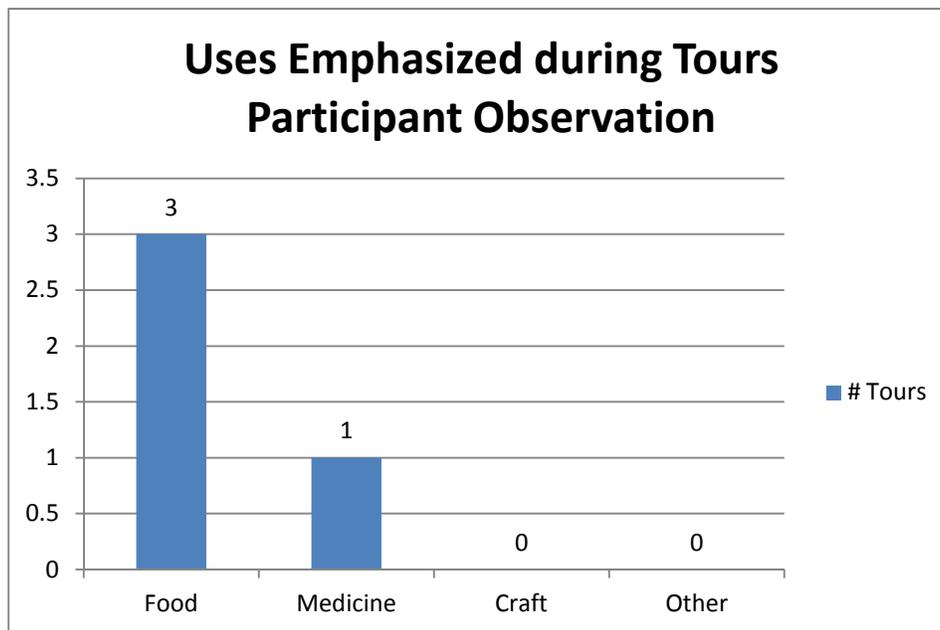


Figure 2. Uses Emphases by Frequency during Participant Observation of Social Meet-Ups.

Gaining Familiarity with Personal Foraging Practices: Interviews with Meetup Tour Participants

After conducting 12 interviews with foragers that I met on the meetup tours, I was able to characterize the breadth of practice of these foragers, the length of time they had been foraging, and their reasons for doing so. Half of my respondents were woman, and the other half were men. Seven interviewees were between the ages of 20-40, and the other 5 were in the 40-60 age range, and all were White except for one Asian. In terms of experience levels, 1 person had foraged for less than a year, 5 people for 1-3 years, 1 person for 3-5 years, and 5 people had more than 5 years of foraging experience. From these 12 interviews, 63 species were identified as being foraged by the respondents, with Plantain, Dandelion, and Mulberry being the most frequently mentioned species. Of the 64 species, 34 were harvested by only 1 person, 11 species were commonly harvested by 2 people, 12 species were commonly harvested by 3 people, 3 species were commonly harvested by 4 people, 2 species (Dandelion and Mulberries) were commonly harvested by 7 people, and 1 species (Plantain) was commonly harvested by 10 different people (See Table 3 and Figure 3). No single species was harvested by everyone that I interviewed. Uses of these species by the interviewees were food for each of the interviewees, medicine for 5 of the interviewees, and other (cleaning supplies and pet food) for two of the interviewees (See Figure 4). There were no craft uses identified by any of the interviewees.

Drawing on their responses to open-ended interview questions, I analyzed these responses to identify common themes. This resulted in 8 themes that touch on topics such as benefits gained from attending meetups, foraging concerns, ways of foraging, and uses of foraged species. The specific themes are:

- The main goal/benefit of people who go on foraging meetups is to expand their knowledge by learning from other people at the meetup and/or the guide
- people gain other benefits from foraging meet ups, such as meeting new people of like-mind, connection to nature, survival skills, and an enjoyable hobby

- Eating wild edibles is more common than using them medicinally
- People opt for impromptu foraging rather than planned foraging trips (i.e. on the walk to and from work, during a daily outing, a walk through the park)
- People’s main concerns revolve around pollutants from motor vehicles and animals, and misidentifying a species and getting sick
- Most people generally do not know if foraging is legal where they do it, and it is not a big concern to them; The rules of legality on foraging are not clear and/or not accessible
- People like having knowledge of local species because it makes them feel more independent and in control both generally and in the rare case of a food shortage emergency.

These themes illustrate both the common and idiosyncratic perspectives of the various interviews. The common perspectives are demonstrated through the common themes listed above and explained below. However the idiosyncratic perspectives include using wild edibles as pet food, identifying plants as a way to pass time during a job, and seeking out permission to gather on private or public land.

People’s main motivation for attending meetups was for the educational benefits was a theme that recurred in every interview. This was also attendee’s main benefit that they took away from the meetups. As one interviewee explained:

“It’s expanding my knowledge of what’s around me...of really having a better understanding of all the amazing things that the earth provides to sustain us. And I find it thrilling. It’s just more knowledge and appreciation of that process”

Interview with Cf July 1, 2015.

Others used the tours as a starting point to begin their experimentation with foraging: “I went to meetups because I didn’t have enough information to do it on my own” (*Interview with Cf June 30, 2015*). The tours served as a way for people to have their questions about species or practices answered right on the spot, instead of having to search through field guides on online references. Because most people are hesitant to try new plants, these tours allowed people to gain the knowledge and confidence to be more fully engaged with their surroundings. As a beginner forager said,

“Sometimes I just can’t seem to find information that I’m looking for online or I find contradicting information online. Especially because they are so many different areas in the United States and things, I’m not really sure what’s true for Philly. There’s a lot of information online about certain things and different plants. I usually store up a bunch of questions and then wait to ask the person who’s leading the walk”

Interview with Cf, June 30, 2015.

Being able to learn from others on the tour is understandably the largest draw and take-away from foraging meetups.

Although education was the main benefit people noted from meetups, respondents talked about a range of other benefits they gain from the tours, including meeting new people of like-mind, connecting to nature, gain of survival skills, and an enjoyable hobby. “It allows me to be connected to the land like I mentioned and sort of have that connection for a minute is sort of like a meditation in a way” (Hj 062315). For other people, the meetups were a way to meet people in a new city: “I would go to the wild foodies’ meetups sometimes just because I didn’t have much of a social life due to the fact that I didn’t know anyone in the city” (Cf 062315). This theme illustrates the fact that foraging tours serve as multifunctional events that can gratify different needs for different people, depending on their experience level and interests.

Another theme that ran through every interview was that it is more common for people to use wild edibles for food rather than for medicine. A common response to the question of whether a person uses the plants they collect for food or medicine is something similar to this:

“I have only used them for eating but I have definitely been on walks where people have talked about other things like rubbing plantain on your skin to soothe irritations. I personally haven’t done anything like that; I’ve just used these things to eat.”

Interview with Hj June 23, 2015.

The interviews revealed that although people may be aware that certain plants can be used medicinally, the vast majority of people only used their species for eating. Another example of this mentality is evident through another forager’s response. I asked,

“So are most of these things that you’re collecting for eating? Do you do any for medicinal purposes at all?” to which she simply answered “not really. Yeah I just seem to be less interested in the medicinal uses”

Interview with Cf June 30, 2015.

Every one of the twelve interviews I conducted had similar responses to this same question.

The reality that people opt for impromptu foraging (i.e., on the walk to and from work, during a daily outing, a walk through the park) rather than planned foraging trips was another theme that arose from the interviewing process. It became clear that many people did the majority of their harvesting during daily outings around the city and often did not plan special trips for the specific purpose of harvesting species. “It’s not usually that I’m going to go out and forage, it’s that I’m out walking and I find something to stick in my mouth” (Cp 070215). Interviewees pointed out that, other than to attend wild foodies meetups “I don’t usually travel out of my way specifically to forage” (Nj 070715) and we’ll kind of pick things when we’re out and about but that’s about it” (Di 070715).

It became clear to me after doing the interviews that people’s main concerns when it comes to foraging revolve around pollutants from motor vehicles and animals, and misidentifying a species and getting sick. As one forager put it,

“I might be unable to distinguish between two species. So I definitely want to learn more and learn about look alikes that could be dangerous. I want to know what those are so I don’t make a mistake and poison myself.... I wouldn’t just try things. I would always try to identify the plant and maybe if I had any uncertainty...like mushrooms, I wouldn’t mess with mushrooms. Just because I don’t know them, it’s hard to distinguish one from another. And I would leave that to an expert.”

Interview with Cp July 2, 2015.

Another major concern of foragers, especially foragers in an urban area, is the danger that comes with living in a polluted area.

“I’m always concerned if municipalities or people are spraying or dumping what kind of toxic chemicals are in the soil. Because some plants are really good at remediating soils but unfortunately they pull those toxins up into their system and if you’re eating them you’re ingesting could be heavy metals, so sort of the reason I don’t eat anything from the roadside just because you never know what’s in it”

Interview with Lf June 15, 2015.

It is not always easy to know whether an area's soil is polluted or not, or what kind of toxins could be in the plant itself, and it is for this reason that foragers worry about issues like these.

However, something that was not generally a concern to the people with whom I talked was the legality of the foraging they do—whether certain parks or areas of land allowed foraging or not. Most people did not know if their practices were legal, and most were not sure how to find out. One respondent noted,

“uh that never occurred to me. I assumed it was legal but I guess there are some protected species that it might be illegal to pluck. So that's an interesting though I'd like to look at what those might be. It did not occur to me”

Interview with Cp July 2, 2015.

When I asked people the question of whether they knew if foraging was legal or not, they were often surprised and a bit confused, usually because it was something they had never considered:

“I don't know, I honestly don't know. I've always thought that I went with the meetup group and there were people there who know a lot more than I do, I figured if they were doing it I would do it. But no I truly don't know”

Interview with Hj June 23, 2015.

In response to this question, many people realized that the legality of foraging was not well publicized or enforced and therefore was not a big concern to them. “I guess it could technically be illegal for some reason but I'm positive that nobody will enforce that”, remarked one forager (Cf 063015). Another forager noted a similar phenomenon:

I get the impression that it's all sort of sketchy to how legal it is or is not. Or whether anyone is really going to press charges... I get the impression that the legality is not really clear where the boundaries lie

Interview with Cf July 1, 2015

However, although most people I talked to didn't know or care too much about legality, some people were not so lax. One man explained how he has been asking for permission to harvest on lands that are not explicitly public:

most recently in Philadelphia there's two churches I asked for permission. One of them had sour cherry, and the other had like serviceberries. And I asked...there was like a private park...I don't even know if it was private...I don't think its...maybe it's like a non-profit run park and I asked for permission from the grounds manager and he didn't have any problems with it. So that was like three in the past couple months.

Interview with Nj July 7, 2015

So while legality of foraging is a topic with very little known, some people take the extra step to ensure that they're not breaking any laws or making land owners uncomfortable.

The final theme that emerged from my interviewing was that people like having knowledge of local species because it makes them feel more independent and in control both generally and in the rare case of a food shortage emergency. It is important for people to feel connected to and reliant on local nature as a way to ensure that they have the skills they need to be okay on their own.

“I like it as a survival tactic that if for some reason I was out in the woods and I had no food it’s like oh I can feed myself. And I don’t think that will happen but it’s cool to think about and it just makes me feel cool and special...there’s just something about feeling like you’re prepared for anything. It just makes you feel stronger it makes you feel more comfortable. I’m not as worried all the time”

Interview with Cf June 30, 2015

It became clear that there is a very small paranoid part of most people that we cannot depend on the larger system that we so often depend on:

“It’s an important skill to have because if anything ever happens to our whole farming industry and we have to go back to our ways it would be nice to not have to rely on someone else and get screwed over. It’s nice to have an ability to be self-sufficient”

Interview with Lf June 16, 2015

At first I thought that these findings were idiosyncratic, but I soon realized that almost every one of the people I interviewed mentioned something about feeling like they wanted to be able to survive in case of a mass disaster:

“I’m not a hardcore survivalist or anything and I don’t feel like everything’s gonna fall apart and we have to live in the back woods but it would be nice to know that one could find things to eat enough to survive should one get lost or the power grid goes out for weeks at a time”

Interview with Cp July 2, 2015

This final theme of needing independence in our ever-dependent society suggests that the culture of urban foraging is one that distinctly formed around and is specific to that goal.

Table 2. Species Mentioned during Interviews. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of interviews in which that species was mentioned.

1. Plantain (10)	23. Hosta (2)	44. Green briar (1)
2. Dandelion (7)	24. Morel (2)	45. Hazelnut (1)
3. Mulberries (7)	25. Pine (2)	46. Honeysuckle (1)
4. Raspberries (4)	26. Shiso (2)	47. Japanese knotweed (1)
5. Sorrel (4)	27. Spicebush (2)	48. Juneberry (1)
6. Stinging nettle (4)	28. Yarrow (2)	49. Maple (1)
7. Burdock (3)	29. Yellow dock (2)	50. Milkweed (1)
8. Cherry (3)	30. Acorn (1)	51. Mint (1)
9. Chickweed (3)	31. Asiatic dayflower (1)	52. Peach tree (1)
10. Garlic mustard (3)	32. Beach nuts (1)	53. Persimmon (1)
11. Jewelweed (3)	33. Blackberry (1)	54. Pokeweed (1)
12. Lady's thumb (3)	34. Chanterelle (1)	55. Prickly lettuce (1)
13. Lamb's quarters (3)	35. Chicken of the woods (1)	56. Purslane (1)
14. Mugwort (3)	36. Cleavers (1)	57. Queen Anne's lace (1)
15. Sassafras (3)	37. Creeping Charlie (1)	58. Ramps (1)
16. Serviceberries (3)	38. Daylily (1)	59. St. John's wort (1)
17. Violet (3)	39. Elderberry (1)	60. Strawberry (1)
18. Wineberry (3)	40. Forsythia (1)	61. Sunflowers (1)
19. Amaranth (2)	41. Gallium (1)	62. Wild mustard (1)
20. Apple (2)	42. Gilampus (1)	63. Wintergreen (1)
21. Clover (2)	43. Gingko (1)	
22. Crab apple (2)		

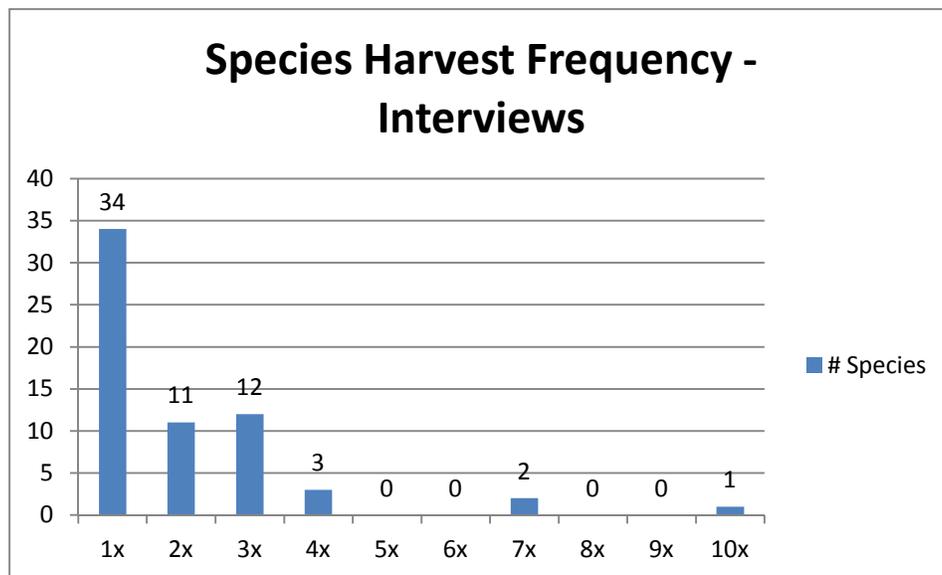


Figure 3. Species by Frequency of Mention by Interviewees.

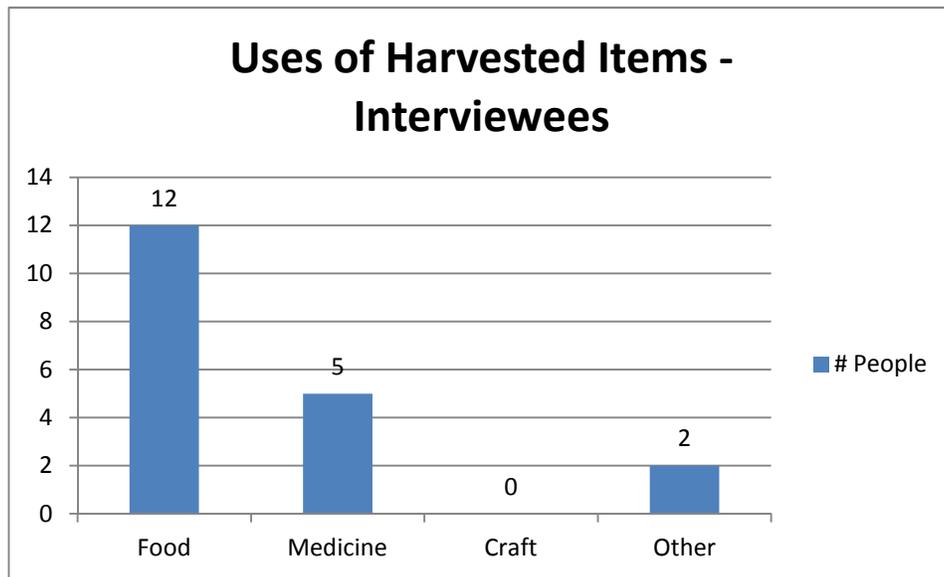


Figure 4. Uses of Harvested Items by Frequency of Mention by Interviewees.

Assessing the Representativeness of Field Work: Analyzing Two Years of Past Meetup Tours

In reviewing the Wild Foodies' past meetups for the last two years, I was able to analyze data about a longer period of time and wider picture of these urban foraging meetups. Over the past two years (May 2013-June 2015), 99 events have occurred and drew a total of 1385 people. I included an event in my data collection if it had three or more attendees, seeing how tours with less than three RSVPs usually do not occur. The vast majority of people who forage in Philadelphia are between the ages of 20-60. Within the past two years of wild foodies events, there have been 137 species encountered, with plantain, chickweed, garlic mustard, lambs quarters, nettles, and spicebush topping the list for most frequently encountered. The most popular location types where these tours take place are city and state parks, and private businesses in the city with 67 out of 99 meetups occurring in these spots. The other 32 meetups were dispersed throughout cemeteries, private nature reserves, and farms outside of the city.

In terms of what was emphasized on each tour, 36 of the meetups focused exclusively on introduction to foraging and identification of species, while only 6 of the tours focused on introduction, identification, and processing of species. Three tours focused on processing alone, and one emphasized introduction and processing without identification. In terms of species uses, 89 meetups focused on edible uses, 27 on medicinal uses, 2 on craft, and 3 on education. This data helps give an summary of the big picture of Wild Foodies meetups that can be compared my participant observation to see whether the tours I attended were representative of the broader picture of meetups.

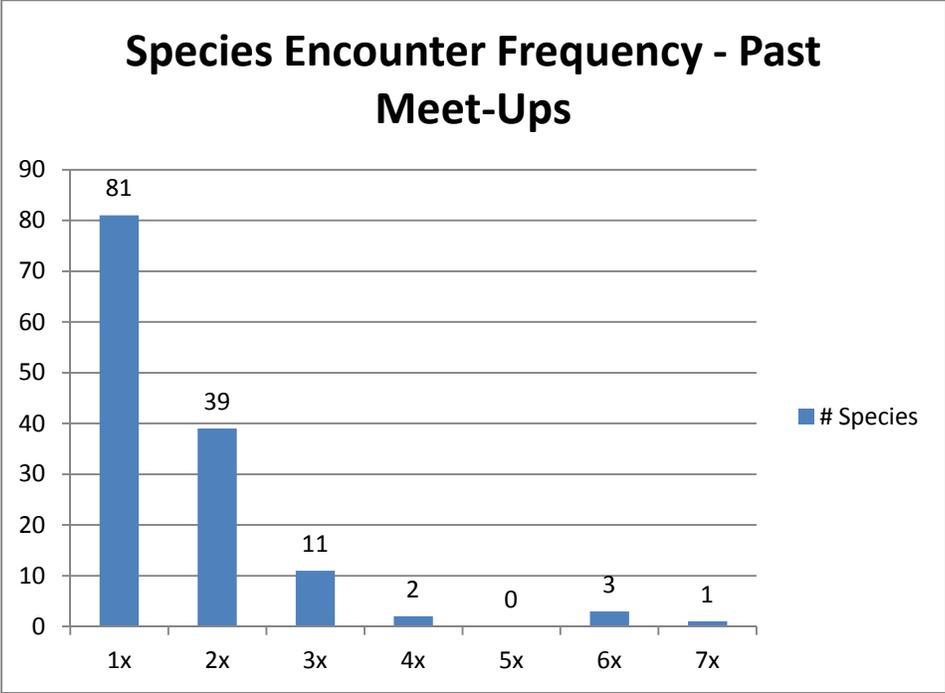


Figure 5. Species Encountered by Frequency during Analysis of Past Meetups.

Table 5. Species Encountered during Past Meetups. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of events at which that species was encountered.

1. Plantain (7)	48. Mulberries (2)	92. Inky Caps (1)
2. Chickweed (6)	49. Onions (2)	93. Lemongrass (1)
3. Garlic mustard (6)	50. Paper mulberries (2)	93. Juneberries (1)
4. Lambs quarters (6)	51. Paw paws (2)	94. Kentucky coffee tree (1)
5. Wineberries (6)	52. Persimmon (2)	95. Lesser Celandine (1)
6. Nettles (4)	53. Ramps (2)	96. Linden (1)
7. Spicebush (4)	54. Red clover (2)	97. Lotus (1)
8. Wood Sorrel (4)	55. Sheep sorrel (2)	98. Lovage (1)
9. Barren strawberry (3)	56. Shiso (2)	99. Marshmallow (1)
10. Black walnut (3)	57. St. John's wort (2)	100. Mint (1)
11. Blackberries (3)	58. Thistle (2)	101. Watercress (1)
12. Chicken of the woods (3)	59. Yarrow (2)	102. Nodding star of Bethlehem (1)
13. Daylilies (3)	60. Acorns (1)	103. Olive berries (1)
14. Hawthorne (3)	61. Ailanthus (1)	104. Oyster (1)
15. Honey locust (3)	62. Brambles (1)	105. Partridge berry (plant) (1)
16. Mile-a-minute (3)	63. Giant puffballs (1)	106. Passionflower (1)
17. Pine (3)	64. Horseradish (1)	107. Patience dock (1)
18. Sassafras (3)	65. Anise-flavored sweet cicely (1)	108. Pear-shaped puffballs (1)
19. Spiderwort (3)	66. Apple mint (1)	109. Peppermint (1)
20. Amaranth (2)	67. Arrowhead (1)	110. Phragmites (1)
21. Annie stalks (2)	68. Autumn olive (1)	111. Catbrier (1)
22. Asiatic dayflower (2)	69. Bamboo (1)	112. Queen Anne's lace (1)
23. Birch (2)	70. Beefsteak mushrooms (1)	113. Raspberry (1)
24. Bittercress (2)	71. Blewits (1)	114. Apple (1)
25. Burdock (2)	72. Brick tops (1)	115. Red maple (1)
26. Cattails (2)	73. Carpetweed (1)	116. Rose of Sharon (1)
27. Cleaver (2)	74. Catnip (1)	117. Rose (1)
28. Echinacea (2)	75. Chamomile (1)	118. Rue (1)
29. Elderberry (2)	76. Chicory (1)	119. Serviceberries (1)
30. Evening primrose (2)	77. Chocolate mint (1)	120. Shagbark hickory (1)
31. Fennel (2)	78. Chufa corms (1)	121. Shaggy manes (1)
32. Feverfew (2)	79. Clover (1)	122. Stevia plants (1)
33. Gingko (2)	80. Crab apples (1)	123. Sugar maple (1)
34. Holly (2)	81. Dandelion (1)	124. Tulsi (1)
35. Honey Mushrooms (2)	82. Dock (1)	125. Wapato (1)
36. Hops (2)	83. Fairy rings (1)	126. White oak (1)
37. Hosta (2)	84. Fleabane (1)	127. Wild carrots (1)
38. Japanese pokeweed (2)	85. Garden Sorrel (1)	128. Wild cherries (1)
39. Knotweed (2)	86. Garlic (1)	132. Wild violet (5)
40. Kousa dogwood (2)	87. Gill-above-ground (1)	129. Wild grape (1)
41. Lemon balm (2)	88. Ginger (1)	130. Wild parsnips (1)
42. Lemons (2)	86. Grapes (1)	131. Wild Raisins (1)
43. Mallow (2)	87. Hackberries (1)	133. Willow (1)
44. Milkweed (2)	88. Hen-of-the woods (1)	137. Yellow dock (1)
45. Mimosa tree (2)	89. Honeysuckle (1)	
46. Motherwort (2)	90. Hot peppers (1)	
47. Mugwort (2)		

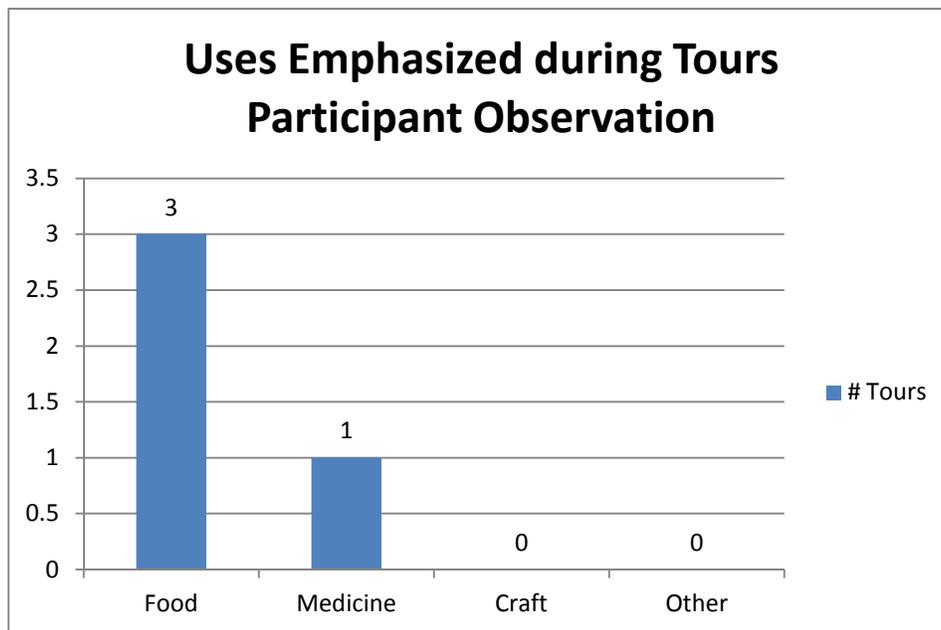


Figure 6. Tour Use Emphasis by Frequency for Past Meet-Ups.

DISCUSSION

These results reveal many different things. For one, they suggest that foraging meetup tours play a major role in introducing residents from the city and the suburbs to foraging, specifically in an urban setting. They are a facilitator of learning for people who are interested in a range of different benefits—free and local food, social interaction, exchange of local knowledge, recreation, connection to nature, and more. Many times these tours serve as a way for foragers to introduce their non-foraging friends or family into an activity that they enjoy. Foraging tours bring people together to openly and safely engage in an activity that might otherwise stay hidden as individual’s personal solitary hobbies.

Based on these data, meetup tours can be categorized based on type of organizer who is leading the tour: expert or facilitator. An expert (someone who has been foraging regularly for more than 5 years) led tour will be more formal, with the expert doing most of the talking and the attendees listening and asking questions and trying species if they wish. A facilitator-led tour, on the other hand, tends to be more collaborative and less structured; people are expected to share what they know about foraging in an attempt to educate others, regardless of experience level. These two different types of tours affect the dynamics of conversation and organization throughout the tour: one being more “student to student”, the other being more “teacher to student”.

These results also suggest that meetups attract a mix of people of different ages, experience levels, and motivations. The groups that attend meetups were diverse, yet each individual found what they were looking for in terms of why they attended in the first place. Some people—namely beginners—go for an introduction into the foraging world. They are interested in learning how to identify common species, how to use them (usually for food), and meeting people that share similar goals. Experienced forgers generally attend meetups in the hopes that some other experienced forager on the tour will know some species or some location that they don’t, therefore expanding their knowledge and their range of species to harvest. For non-beginners, a tour led by an expert is preferable because they will likely be able to provide the group with more specific and useful information than an informal tour led by a facilitator. However, for beginners, either type of tour—an expert led one or a collaborative

one—will be useful because of the fact that beginners are simply looking for a way to get basic knowledge on the subject which is available at any meetup.

The species uses at these meetups focus largely on edible plants, and to a lesser extent medicinal uses, and craft uses a distant third. People who attend meetup tours learn which species are edible, some basics about how to identify them, where to locate them, safe harvesting practices, and sometimes how to prepare the food collected and how to extract/apply the medicines from the species. Either tour organizers or other attendees will share what they know, whether it be how to tell when a species is ready to be eaten or how to use it in a dish for a meal. It is also not uncommon for people to bring field guides with them, or to use a smartphone app or online forum to help identify certain unfamiliar species. Most tours are more focused on the beginning stages of learning how to forage edible plants, such identifying particular species and learning basic harvesting techniques, often leaving out the later stages such as preparing, cooking, and preserving the species. However, sporadic processing and cooking events offer opportunities for learning these aspects. This suggests that foraging meetups are designed first and foremost as a way for people to get introduced into the practice and to expand this community of practice, but additional education and knowledge is needed to continue it to the final stages of cooking if someone desires that. At the same time, many people don't desire to make meals with their foraged items—in fact many people just enjoy eating a few berries here or there on their walk to and from work; or having the knowledge they need to safely consume wild plants on a hike or bike ride.

The fact that so many of the meetup tours occur at city or state parks reveals how important these spaces are to entry into the practice by newcomers or, put another way to the expansion of this practice. These spaces support the sharing of knowledge about edible, medicinal, and to a lesser extent craft-related species. If the plethora of meet-ups and associated tours are any indication, these parks are thought of by city residents as clean and safe areas for gathering “wild” edible and medicinal plants. Since many people are not comfortable gathering near streets or from sidewalks, these parks are seen by foragers as the perfect place to gather from as they are usually set back from busy streets and are abundant with various useful species.

It is interesting to note that while most foragers do not know whether it is legal or not to forage from parks, many of them are not concerned with being punished for collecting. A majority of our interviewees feel that there is no good reason why individuals should not be allowed to collect species—especially invasive weeds (which contribute to a large amount of foraged items)—from the wild. This perspective on park usage suggests that people feel that their right to bounty of the earth as species of the same earth transcends any legal ruling that plants cannot be removed from parks.

CONCLUSION

This research confirms that urban foraging is a lively practice that draws a diverse range of people, and that it has benefits for those who choose to participate in it. It also supports the idea that city parks are a key location where this occurs, as well as the fact that the species found in these areas are common to many other sites such as backyards, sidewalks, and vacant lots. This research challenges previous research that discusses the ways in which city parks are discouraging foraging: no interviewees or people met on the meetups tours had any concern that they would be punished for gathering species, and thus did not feel that they were unwelcome or out of place in their practice.

From this research it is clear that foraging meetups are diverse, in that there are multiple types of tours occurring regularly. These tours include expert-led or facilitator-led, primarily edible focused or medicinal focused, and introduction to foraging or in-depth identification. These different types of tours

may accomplish different things for people trying to learn about foraging. For example, a beginner forager would likely get the introduction information they seek from an expert-led tour or a collaborative tour with other experienced foragers, however an experienced forager may only get the information they want from an expert-led tour while being disappointed with the amount or range of information shared on a collaborative tour. Similarly, since it appears that most foragers begin by using plants for food, more advanced foragers may seek out the medicinal tours to increase their knowledge and thus capabilities in using the species they find. In other words, these tours are uneven in communication of certain types of knowledge that are being shared about the plants.

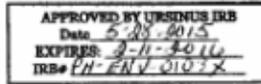
While certain tours may be more apropos to certain individuals because of the information they cover, it is clear that these meetups provide benefits other than just the knowledge of edible and medicinal plants. These benefits range from connection to nature to basic survival skills to social interactions and the sharing of a hobby with others. For example, someone may go on a tour explicitly to learn about rare species, and even if the tour doesn't provide that they will still have the benefits of interacting with nature and possibly meeting a fellow forager who does know the information they are seeking. These tours provide ways for people to connect with the land and one another in ways that expand their opportunities for learning.

Future research on this subject should pay attention to secondary and tertiary species uses, especially species that have multiple uses, because this information would give an even more nuanced picture of the foraging community of practice. By looking at what species provide multiple uses, one could create a database of the most valuable species based on how many uses they have, and compare that with what the most popular foraged species are. This would show whether foragers see value in species that have multiple uses, or if they are mainly focused on finding different species to fulfil different roles in their life. It would also be interesting to note how many and which of those species are invasive, because if there are invasive species with multiple uses that have value to foragers, this could make a good case for those trying to persuade land managers to allow and even encourage foraging on their land.

Works Cited

- Emery, Marla R. "Special Forest Products in Context: Gatherers and Gathering in the Eastern United States." *United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service* (2002): n. pag.
- Hurley, Patrick T., Marla R. Emery, Rebecca Mclain, Poe, Melissa, and Cari L. Goetcheus "Ch. 7 Whose Urban Forest." *Sustainability in the Global City: Myth and Practice*. 2015. N. pag.
- Jahnige, Paul. "The Hidden Bounty of the Urban Forest." (2001): n. pag. Web.
- Mclain, Rebecca J., Patrick T. Hurley, Marla R. Emery, and Melissa R. Poe. "Gathering "wild" Food in the City: Rethinking the Role of Foraging in Urban Ecosystem Planning and Management." *Local Environment* 19.2 (2013): 220-40. Web.
- Poe, Melissa R., Rebecca J. Mclain, Marla Emery, and Patrick T. Hurley. "Urban Forest Justice and the Rights to Wild Foods, Medicines, and Materials in the City." *Hum Ecol Human Ecology* 41.3 (2013): 409-22. Web.
- Poe, Melissa R., Joyce Lecompte, Rebecca Mclain, and Patrick Hurley. "Urban Foraging and the Relational Ecologies of Belonging." *Social & Cultural Geography* 15.8 (2014): 901-19. Web.

Appendix A. Interview consent form



You have been invited to participate in a research project that is being conducted by Rob Durst, Rebecca Fong, Megan Hanscom, Kristin McGillis and Dr. Patrick Hurley in the Environmental Studies program at Ursinus College.

A number of recent articles have appeared in the popular media and on a number of websites that point to the presence within and surrounding U.S. cities of the longstanding human practice of gathering plants, fungi, and other botanical organisms. Indeed, a number of groups and organizations dedicated to urban gathering have emerged in many US cities in the past decade. To date, however, there is little known by academic researchers about either urban gathering practices or the people who engage in these practices. This project seeks to fill this important gap in our understanding of human-environment interactions in U.S. cities, by focusing on the Philadelphia Metropolitan area.

You were chosen to participate in this project because of your indirect or direct involvement with: 1) the collection of plant materials and/or mushrooms from places within the study region; 2) testimony at a public hearing about topics related to park management in a county or municipal venue; or 3) management of parks or green space where plant and/or fungi collection may take place. By talking to individuals associated with the collection of plant materials and/or fungi in the city, we hope to learn what you think about this issue and the management decisions that affect gathering. We expect this interview, involving a series of open-ended questions, to last no more than 90 minutes. **Your participation in this research is voluntary.**

If you decide to participate in this research study, **any information** you give me will be **kept strictly confidential**. We will not give any information about you to anyone else. Your participation in this interview is because you have indicated your willingness to be interviewed, by replying to an email, a phone call, or a personal request from a member of the research team.

If you choose, you can sign below indicating your willingness to participate or you can choose not to. By answering our questions, you are agreeing to participate in the research project. You should feel free to decline to answer any specific questions for any reason with no explanation necessary. When we are done interviewing everyone who has volunteered to participate, we will transcribe each of the interviews and destroy the recordings of the interviews at the completion of the project. Any information you provide will be confidential and used solely for academic purposes. This includes use in teaching materials and potentially in published, peer-reviewed publications. In either case, your name or other explicit identifier will never be used in conjunction with any of the recorded material that we might use in an academic writing.

We want to reassure you that there are 'no strings attached' to this research: *We have no affiliation with any businesses or political organizations in Bucks, Chester, Delaware, or Montgomery counties, or in the City of Philadelphia, nor do any of us have any affiliation or connection to local landowners or the specific agencies that manage land, parks, or green space.*

Rob Durst, Rebecca Fong, and Megan Hanscom, and Kristin McGillis are all majoring in Environmental Studies at Ursinus College in Collegeville, PA. Dr. Patrick Hurley is an assistant professor of Environmental Studies at Ursinus.

By participating, you will incur no obligations of any kind, and you are free to request that your answers to interview questions be removed from the research study at any time by contacting us by email (phurley@ursinus.edu) or by phone (Dr. Hurley: 484-762-4323).

Optional signature: _____ Date: _____

If you have any questions about us, about this research study, or regarding your rights as a participant in this study, please contact: The Institutional Review Board at Ursinus College, 601 East Main Street, Collegeville, PA 19426. Or email: irbadmin@ursinus.edu

This form is for you to keep for your records.

Appendix B. Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Introductory narrative:

I'm working on a project with Dr. Patrick Hurley in Environmental Studies at Ursinus College that looks at the gathering of plant products and fungi in urban areas. We're trying to get a sense for the kinds of products they're gathering and why, who's doing the gathering and where people are gathering these products. We're starting out by contacting organizations such as yours that might have on-the-ground knowledge of gathering activities in different parts of the city and who might be able to help us locate people who gather plant products in the city.¹

Screening question:

Have you seen or heard of people gathering plant products or fungi in your neighborhood/part of the city/?

1. If no: We've found that in some areas people gather plant products, such as leaves, berries, nuts, and bark, and fungi.
 - Can you provide any insights as to why people might not be gathering plant products and fungi in your area? (*or at least why they aren't visibly doing so*)
 - What issues or concerns would you see arising if people began to gather plant products and fungi in your neighborhood/part of the city? (Get them to talk about these relative to the three major ecotypes we're interested in - open spaces, edges and ends, and streetscapes)
 - What benefits would you see to encouraging the gathering of plant products and fungi in your neighborhood/part of the city?

If yes:

Gathering Basics

1. Do you gather any plants, plant materials, or other items not derived from animals in nearby forests or fields? **[Wait]**
 - a. *Plants (including parts of plants)?*
 - b. *Mushrooms?*

¹ (Additional details if need to clarify what we're interested in: a) We're interested in talking with people who gather products from trees or other plants (and fungi) located in parks, street easements, or other people's yards and b) we're interested in many types of gathered products – fruit, nuts, cones, leaves, bark, branches, firewood, fungi - and uses -- food, medicines, crafts, etc.)

- c. *Lichens (an organism composed of fungi and algae that may appear green, gray, yellow, brown, or black in color and that grows in crust-like formations on rocks and trees)?*
 - d. *Mosses?*
 - e. *Other (please specify)?*
2. What kinds of things do you gather (nuts, seeds, fruit, mushrooms, etc.)? Please list specific species if possible.
3. What parts of these items do you use? **[List Quickly]**
 - *Fruit?*
 - *Leaves?*
 - *Bark?*
 - *Other (please specify)?*
4. What do you use these species for? **[Wait, then list quickly]**
 - a. *Eating or using for yourself, family and friends?*
 - b. *Sale or barter?*
 - c. *Medicinal purposes?*
 - d. *Other (please specify)?*
5. When did you begin gathering plants and other items from the woods? **[List Quickly for them to Choose]**
 - a. *Within the past 5 years?*
 - b. *Within the past 12 months?*
 - c. *Other (please explain)?*
6. How often and during what times of the year do you gather these products? If you gather during multiple seasons of the year, what are the specific products that you gather during each of these seasons? **[Show gathering wheel]**
7. What is the primary reason that you gather? **[Wait, then List]**
 - a. *Subsistence?*
 - b. *Monetary purposes?*
 - c. *Cultural tradition?*
 - d. *Community cohesion?*
 - e. *Other (please specify)?*
8. How important to you is your ability to practice gathering? Why?

Gathering, Interacting with Others, and Land Use Regimes

9. Where do you go to find the plants and materials that you gather? Describe the types of vegetation, buildings, pavement, etc. and the ways these lands are used (e.g., recreational activities) in the areas you go to gather

10. Who owns the land in the areas where you gather? [Wait briefly, then list]

Is it:

- a. *Private property?*
- b. *Public managed property (e.g., city parks)?*
- c. *Street trees?*
- d. *Other (please specify)?*

11. If you gather on private property, do you get permission from the owner ahead of time, or do you ask the landowner when you see something you want to collect?

12. If you haven't received permission to gather on private property, why not? Do you still gather items?

13. If you have received permission to gather on private property, do you ever give the property owner anything in exchange for permission to gather on their land?

14. What is your relationship to property owners who you have encountered while gathering? [Wait briefly, then list]

- a. *Neighbor?*
- b. *Relative?*
- c. *Stranger?*
- d. *Other (please specify)?*

15. How far do you have to travel to get to these areas in which you gather?

16. Do you worry about other people seeing you when you gather?

If yes: how do you cope or deal with that the possibility of someone watching you/of being seen?

17. How do you harvest the products that you gather? [List]

- a. *Hand pulling/picking?*
- b. *Cutting/clipping?*
- c. *Digging?*
- d. *Other (please specify)?*

18. Do you do anything to take care of the areas in which you gather plants? [Wait briefly, then list]

- a. *Replanting/spreading seeds?*
 - b. *Clear brush/undergrowth?*
 - c. *Clear trees/shrubs?*
 - d. *Fertilize, water, or other conventional landscaping techniques?*
 - e. *“Fencing” areas?*
19. Are there any restrictions regarding gathering practices present and/or enforced within any of the sites in which you gather species (e.g., formal and informal laws)?
20. Have you experienced any changes in access to lands for gathering during the time you have been gathering? What about any changes in the attitudes of law enforcement?
21. How do you go about finding areas in which you can gather? For example, do you:
- a. *Find parks (city parks, open space area, natural areas, nature preserves, state parks) with parking and easily accessible trails [WAIT BRIEFLY HERE, then list REST]*
 - b. *Visit parks with parking, few trails*
 - c. *Visit parks with minimally developed areas*
 - d. *Find roadside areas with little traffic*
 - e. *Find roadside areas irrespective of traffic*
 - f. *Find wooded areas that have no signs posted (trespassing)*
 - g. *Find wooded areas or fields irrespective of signs*
 - h. *Find other community areas (subdivisions, golf courses, etc.)*
 - i. *Find neighborhood streets (ask owner)*
 - j. *Find neighborhood streets (don’t ask owner)*
 - k. *Other? Please describe*
22. Do you feel that the gathering practices that you engage in are risky or dangerous? [WAIT]
How so?
23. Are you concerned with possible health risks associated with consuming wild edibles (e.g., air pollution, heavy metal uptake by plants, etc.)? If so, what measures do you take in order to reduce these risks?
24. Have you ever experienced any conflicts when attempting to gather? If yes, with whom?
[WAIT]
- a. *Private property owner?*
 - b. *Public property managers?*
 - c. *Park officials?*
 - d. *Other individuals (please describe)?*
25. Have you ever encountered anyone else who was gathering in the same place you were? If so, what happened? Was it a problem for you to gather in the same place as someone else?

26. If you have encountered others gathering in the same areas you do, were they gathering the same or different products?

Ways of Gathering

27. When you go out gathering, do you go: **[LIST QUICKLY]**

- a. *By yourself?*
- b. *As a member of a small group?*
- c. *As a member of a large, organized group?*
- d. *Other (please explain)?*

28. If you ever gather as a member of a group, how often do you do so?

29. How did you learn about gathering? **[LIST QUICKLY]**

- a. *Books and field guides?*
- b. *Family members?*
- c. *Public tour?*
- d. *Local newspaper/newsletter?*
- e. *Internet community/web blog?*
- f. *Other (please specify)?*

30. Would you encourage other individuals to engage in gathering practices? Do you believe that more people should? Please explain your reasoning.

Demographic Questions

The following questions concern demographic information and you should feel free to refrain from answering any of them. We appreciate your willingness to share.

31. Which of the following best describes the area in which you live? [Wait briefly, then list]

- a. *Urban area*
- b. *Suburban area*
- c. *Rural area*
- d. *Other (please specify)*

32. Which of the following best describes the type of housing you live in? [Wait briefly, then list]

- a. *Apartment*
- b. *Condominium*
- c. *Townhome*
- d. *Single family house in subdivision*
- e. *Single family home (non-subdivision)*
- f. *Other (please explain)*

33. Do you rent or own your home?

34. Which of the following do you identify as: [LIST]

- a. *African American?*
- b. *Asian American?*
- c. *Hispanic American?*
- d. *White American?*
- e. *Hispanic?*
- f. *Asian?*
- g. *African?*
- h. *European?*
- i. *Other (please specify)?*

35. Which ethnic group do you identify with?

36. Where were you born?

37. What year were you born?

38. What is your occupation?

39. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- a. *High school*
- b. *Two-year college degree*
- c. *Four-year college degree*

- d. Professional degree*
- e. Master's degree*
- f. PhD*

40. Which of the following best describes your income level?

- a. Less than \$20,000*
- b. \$20,000-\$50,000*
- c. \$50,000-\$100,000*
- d. \$100,000-\$200,000*
- e. Greater than \$200,000*

Appendix C. Wild Foodies of Philly website home page and foraging meetup announcement

The image shows a screenshot of the Wild Foodies of Philly website. At the top is a yellow banner with the text "Wild Foodies of Philly". Below the banner is a navigation bar with links for "Home", "Members", "Photos", "Pages", "Discussions", and "More". On the right side of the navigation bar is a "My profile" link with a user icon. The main content area is divided into three columns. The left column features a large image of a yellow dandelion flower, followed by the text "Philadelphia, PA" and "Founded Sep 26, 2010". Below this are two buttons: "About us..." and "Invite friends". The middle column has a main heading "There's Food Beneath Your Feet! More at WildFoodies.org" and a button "+ SCHEDULE A NEW MEETUP". Below this are three tabs: "Upcoming 8", "Past", and "Calendar". The selected tab shows an announcement for "Cobbs Creek Walk - Phlka sude of Mount Moriah Cemetary" (sic) at "Mount Moriah Cemetery main gate", located at "62nd Street & Kingsessing Avenue, Philadelphia, PA". The event is scheduled for "Sat Jul 25" at "10:00 AM". There is an "RSVP" button, and it shows "2 days left" and "8 going". Below the text is a row of profile pictures of participants. The right column is titled "What's new" and contains three small images: a person holding a plant stem, a close-up of green leaves with yellow flowers, and another close-up of green leaves.