



**Standards and Practices for
“Certified Sustainably Foraged” Designation**

**Wild Leeks (*Allium Tricoccum*)
2016 - 2017**

Applicant

Date

Background

Ramps/Wild Leeks – *Allium Tricoccum*

Allium tricoccum is a bulb-forming perennial with broad, smooth, light green leaves, often with deep purple or burgundy tints on the lower stems, and a scallion-like stalk and bulb. Both the white lower leaf stalks and the broad green leaves are edible. The flower stalk appears after the leaves have died back. The flowers eventually dry to reveal small hard black seeds atop the flower stalk. Ramps grow in close groups strongly rooted just beneath the surface of the soil.

Found in the same area as certain other spring ephemerals such as trillium and trout lily, *Allium Tricoccum* are native to much of eastern North America. Their range extends across Canada’s southern provinces of Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Quebec and Nova Scotia, to northern New England from Maine south to Delaware, south to North Carolina and Maryland, in the uplands of Georgia and Tennessee, west and north to Missouri and Illinois and everywhere in between.

They are commonly found growing in “clumps” or “patches” typically in rich, moist deciduous forests. They emerge in early spring as smooth, broad green leaves rising from an onion-like bulb. The leaves wither and disappear before the flowers appear in May, June or July depending on location, and in some areas, elevation. Atop a naked stem, small creamy-white flowers form a small domed cluster, which becomes a crown of black pearls as seeds mature.

****Note**** *The Institute recognizes that there is a variant of the plant *Allium Tricoccum* – *Allium Tricoccum* var. *Burdicki* – but restricts this certification to *Allium Tricoccum* and recommends avoiding harvest of the variant where it can be identified as much less is known about its state of health, abundance, differences in reproduction rates if any etc.*



Sensitivity to Overharvest

Ramps/Wild Leek is a plant with specific characteristics that make it particularly sensitive to over-harvest. First, the plant has two means by which it can propagate itself. It produces seeds each fall, which all evidence suggests require a hard freeze to sprout, and another year to grow to maturity, requiring as much as 3 years to reproduce via seed. It can also reproduce from the rhizome, which is a part of its root system, but that reproduction is little understood, and the rate at which this may occur is not scientifically available.

Given the difficult nature of its natural reproduction, ramps/wild leeks have fallen victim to over-harvesting in geographies where harvesting pressure is high and the plant's population may not be as robust as other areas. A prominent example is the Great Smoky National Park, which has traditionally allowed for the harvest of ramps for personal use, but has now banned their harvesting due to damage to the resource from harvesting beyond the ability of the plant to naturally regrow, causing a net loss of the resource.

The Certification Program

The founders of the Institute spent considerable time researching the country to see if any organizations or certifying parties of any kind were addressing the issue of over-harvesting, with the emphasis on determining methods of harvest that *can be sustainable over time*. Unfortunately, while there is considerable attention to timber certification, there is no program designed to identify the best practices for harvesting ramps that will protect the long-term viability of the resource for personal and commercial harvest to meet individual consumers, chefs and others interest in utilizing the plant as a specialty food crop.

As a result, and with the continued demand for ramps in the marketplace, the Institute for Sustainable Foraging was established to determine best practices for harvesting that can currently be identified, continue to research the sustainable harvesting of ramps, and other foraged foods, and establish a means by which harvesters could become certified as conducting their activities consistent with the best practices for harvest as they are currently understood.

Certified Party Defined

The "certified party" is the individual or organization granted this designation by the Institute and includes all individuals who engage in the activities governed by the standards and practices in this document whether they are employees, contractors, volunteers or otherwise affiliated with the certified party.

Limitations on Certification

The Institute's certification program for ramps is predicated primarily on years of field study by active foragers who have consistently strived to amend and improve their practices so they are utilizing methods best understood to retain the long-term viability of the resource.



****Note**** *The Institute, while committed to participate and undertake research regarding the sustainability of harvest methods for ramps and, over time, other foraged goods, **makes no scientific claims** as to the validity of these standards and practices and how they may or may not affect the resources in question.*

Because there is no manner by which to determine the number of foragers or intensity of their harvest on public land, this certification program is only applicable to those certified parties that focus their activities substantially on PRIVATE LAND ONLY, and ONLY THOSE PRODUCTS HARVESTED FROM PRIVATE LAND can carry the seal of the Institute.

STANDARDS AND PRACTICES

I. Landowner Relations - The purpose of this section is to define the requirements of a business relationship between a landowner and a certified party (“Certification Standards”) (As previously expressed, this certification program is restricted to those certified parties that are harvesting their product predominantly from PRIVATE land.)

- A. The certified party should have a written agreement with each landowner on whose land they conduct activities. Ideally, each agreement should take the form of a lease or harvest contract and should be for the duration of not less than 5 years so that the certified party has sufficient time to determine the effects of their activities on the property and adjust methods accordingly. At a minimum, the agreement should also include: the description of the property in question, the duration of the agreement, the fact that the harvesting activities will be undertaken consistent with the Certification Standards, that the landowner recognizes that the lessor/contractor’s certified status may require access to the property from an Institute representative, third party auditor, or researcher, and that any such access shall be coordinated with the landowner. _____
- B. The agreement should contain an affirmative clause that states that the certified party agrees to harvest consistent with the Certification Standards, including standards and practices for long-term sustainability of the resource while also allowing sufficient flexibility to adjust practices to correct for errors. _____
- C. If the certified party elects to harvest on public land, (SEE “Limitations on Certification” above) then the landowner shall remain committed to the same or more conservative standards and practices than those espoused herein, and shall abide by all rules, regulations and other restrictions that may be set forth by the public landowner. _____



II. Site Selection - The purpose of this section is to define those areas that are suitable for harvest under this certification program.

A. Areas Selected for Harvest

1. The certified party shall select areas for harvest with a density of ramps that would be widely characterized as abundant for the region in which it is located. The Institute recognizes that this will vary from region to region. _____
2. Within such an area, harvesting shall take place in the areas with the highest density of ramps in healthy condition. _____

B. Plants Selected for Harvest

1. Plants should be harvested when they are mature with fully mature leaves and larger bulbs, as it is likely that these plants have already had the chance to reproduce. _____
2. Harvesting young bulbs, or “bullets” as they are sometimes called, is discouraged. However, should the certified party elect to harvest these, they should be taken from the healthiest areas available using one of the approved harvesting methods. Not more than 10% of the plants in a designated harvest area should be removed at this stage of the plant’s development. The certified party shall document how these sites are selected and keep such documentation with other materials associated with that harvest site. _____
3. Specific care should be taken to prevent the introduction or expand the existence of invasive species such as garlic mustard by disturbing the soil or making new openings for such invasive plants to take a foothold. Areas where ramps are concentrated and healthy, and appear to be precluding the introduction of invasive species such as garlic mustard that may exist nearby or in the vicinity, should be avoided for harvest. _____

***Note** Anecdotal evidence suggests that healthy, concentrated areas of ramps may naturally preclude the introduction of non-native species like garlic mustard. The Institute is specifically interested in further study in this area.*



III. Harvesting - The purpose of this section is to define the methods to be followed and any limitations on harvesting for the certified party.

- A. Plants should be harvested using one of the following methods, which are in order of increasing impact on the resource:
1. Harvest only leaves for any market that is interested in just their use. The Institute fully understands that whole plants are most desirable in the marketplace, but efforts to sell only leaves for uses such as sauces, soups, pesto, etc. can help to reduce the stress on the resource as leaf harvest appears to have little negative effect on the plant's reproduction. _____
 2. Harvest fully mature plants by the "snap" method where the bulb is separated from its root and associated material by snapping the bulb near its base. _____
 3. Harvest full plants while taking care to dig up as little root and rhizome material as possible. Any excess material should be returned to the soil in the expectation that it may aid reproduction. _____
- B. Foragers should strive to keep harvests under 20% of the total plants in a given area and should rotate harvest areas on an annual basis to insure sufficient time for reproduction of plants from those areas where plants have been thinned by harvesting. Under no circumstances should all plants be removed from a given area of more than 4 square feet. _____
- C. EXCEPTION: Where an area is well known to the forager and they are familiar with the reproduction habits of that area, then the 20% limit can be modestly extended but under no circumstances should it exceed 25% of the plants in the area. _____
- D. Where re-seeding and/or agroforestry methods are used, the forager should use their discretion as to what methods are showing the best results for sustaining a long-term population of ramps for their continued relative abundance. In these instances, the measure of limitation shall not be a percentage of the plants available, but rather the long-term viability of the method as observed over not less than a three-year period of time. Such activities should not be undertaken on areas other than those that are controlled by the forager by lease or contract for a minimum of 5-years, preferably longer. _____



III. Product Handling - The purpose of this section is to define how the product should be properly handled.

- A. Plants in the Allium family are susceptible to botulism. All handling of the product must include a plan directed toward precluding the potential opportunity for the product to botulize. _____
- B. Harvested plants shall be chilled no less than 90 minutes from their removal from the ground in order to ensure product safety and quality. _____
- C. From harvest to end use the handling and processing of the product shall comply with all food safety and other applicable regulations. _____

IV. Traceability - The purpose of this section is to define the methods the certified party shall utilize to ensure reasonable traceability in the event of a food safety or other concern. We are committed to including any provisions in this section that may be developed by any authorized agency or authority as food safety regulations further develop.

- A. Each plant should be traceable to 40 acres from which it was harvested. _____
- B. Aerial photographs of the harvest area should be kept on file showing the location within such 40 acres that the plants were harvested. _____
- C. The certified party should strive to define GPS coordinates for each specific harvested area. _____
- D. The certified party should strive to take and keep photographs of the harvested areas both prior to and after harvest. _____
- E. Such records should be kept on file, and records by bag or box of product associated with such location identified so that, should a food safety or other reason arise, there is a method to identify the derivation of the product. _____



V. Other Obligations of Certification

- A. Certified parties should be willing to participate in research undertaken by the Institute and otherwise be supportive of the Institute's various activities. _____
- B. Certified parties understand that a modest charge for seals, or use of seals might be instituted in the future to support certification and research efforts as defined in section VII below. _____

VI. THIRD PARTY AUDIT COMMITMENT

Each party who receives certification by the Institute for Sustainable Foraging shall be audited for compliance with the standards and practices stated herein by a third party auditor.

While parties certified in 2016 may not be audited in 2016, they will be audited in 2017, and not less than every three years thereafter in order to retain their certification.

The cost associated with the third party audit shall be the responsibility of the certified party, and identifying an auditor(s) shall be the responsibility of the Institute. Charges for audits shall be consistent with the amount of product harvested by the certified party and shall be consistent with the cost of similar certifications, such as those for timber certification, organic certification etc.

VII. USE OF CERTIFICATION SEAL

Upon being successfully granted certification by the Institute, executing the Institute for Sustainable Foraging Certification Mark License Agreement, and paying all applicable fees, the certified party shall be entitled to utilize the Institute's seal that states their products are "**certified sustainably foraged**" subject to the terms of the Institute for Sustainable Foraging Certification Mark License Agreement.

Remember, in the event that the certified party handles any product that does not meet the certification guidelines of the Intitute, e.g. has been harvested from public land, then the certified party CANNOT utilize the seal or make any claims as to the Institute's disposition regarding that product.

To be absolutely clear, no bag, box, or other container holding ramps/wild leeks should carry the seal of the Institute unless a) the certified party is certified; (b) the certified



party has and continues to meet the Certification Standards; (c) the certified party has executed the Institute for Sustainable Foraging Certification Mark License Agreement; and d) all of the product contained meets the certification criteria herein.

CERTIFICATION COSTS

- 1) Each certified party shall be charged a fee of \$250 for the granting of certification upon completion of a review of this document by a staff member or authorized associate of the Institute who verifies that a certified party is abiding by all requirements as stated herein.
- 2) The costs of “Certified Sustainably Foraged” seals that be \$.05/each for certified parties to use on certified products.
- 3) Remember that each certified party will be required to pay for a third-party audit for certification and that such audit fee shall be adjusted to the size of the certified party in question at the time of the audit.

I have read and reviewed these standards and practices with an authorized representative of the Institute and understand and agree to abide by the Standards and Practices for Ramp/Wild Leek Certification through the Institute for Sustainable Foraging as set forth herein for the years 2016-17. I understand that such agreement commits me to a third party audit and agree to participate in said audit as designed by the Institute. I understand that such designation grants me the right to utilize the Institute’s seal to identify products have been harvested consistently with the Institute’s Standards and Practices and only those products.

Certified Party Owner or Authorized Representative:

Printed Name

Signature

Date

If not hand delivered to 1610 Barlow, Traverse City, MI 49686, please mail this document, signed, to:

Institute for Sustainable Foraging
109 East Front Street, Suite 309
Traverse City, MI 49684