

HOW TO DO A PLANT STUDY - LEARNING THEIR MEDICINE

Here's a simple method for studying a plant and learning its medicine. No matter where you are, even in the most congested city, you can find healing allies. The most powerful plants for medicine are the plants that live where you live.

To make a dream journey to a plant you will need the following:

1. OFFERINGS TO THE PLANT: Loose tobacco or cornmeal. In a pinch, you can pour water in a sacred manner or take a piece of your hair.
2. A guidebook with pictures and descriptions of local plants
3. A notebook and colored pencils or markers
4. A drum and someone to beat it, or a recorded drumming session

Open your mind and heart to the idea that plants have spirits. Begin with a prayer of appreciation for any help they may give you. Do the Heart Opening Exercise. Notice the plants. If you don't have a specific plant in mind, then find one that seems to attract you. Introduce yourself and explain that you've come to learn from its spirit. Thank it for summoning you. Make an offering as a gift.

Identify the plant in your field guide. If you don't have a guide, then look it up later. Sit with it and study it closely. Draw it. Try to memorize its shape, color, texture, everything about it and how it seems to relate to the other plants around it and its particular qualities. You want to make sure it's not poisonous, so if not, touch it, smell it, and taste it. Take time to get to know the plant. It may take 30-45 minutes.

Go to a quiet, comfortable spot indoors to do a dream journey. Lie down and get comfortable without crossing your arms or legs. Close your eyes and begin to breathe deeply. State your intention to meet the plant's spirit. Start the drumming for about 13 - 15 minutes.

Visualize yourself entering a hole in the earth, finding a tunnel and follow it down until you emerge into a light that is the dream world, or lower world. Look around for the plant's spirit. It may come to you as a person, insect, animal, color, light or voice. Introduce yourself and ask permission to learn from the plant spirit. It may teach you in many ways - talking with you to taking you on an adventure, showing you something. Everything is important. When the dream is complete, thank the spirit again and you may ask if there's anything it would like in exchange. Usually the offering you made to the plant when you first met it is all it wants. Thank the spirit again and retrace your route up the tunnel and back to the world.

Record every detail of your dream journey in your notebook. Contemplate the dream material. Sometimes dreams can be understood only after strange coincidences weeks, months or years later.