

Ashi-niswi giizisoog (Thirteen Moons)

Gashkadine-giizis

The new Gashkadine-giizis begins Nov. 24. This is the Freezing Moon. Another name for this month is Adikomemi-giizis, the Whitefish Moon.



Lobelia

Asemaa and Apaakozigan

By Nikki Crowe

Native American Nations have a long tradition of using asemaa (tobacco) for smudging and prayer. I heard a story told once by an Elder about asemaa. He said, “the Creator did not give us fur or thick skin and shells to keep us warm and protected like he did other animals, nor did he give us claws, antlers or the speed needed to pursue food; what the Creator gave us was asemaa to ask for what we needed and to give thanks for what we were provided.” This practice is still done at ceremonies to honor the earth and spirits as well in the daily lives of our community members.

There are several ways to procure tobacco for use; purchasing a pouch of Prince Albert from the Fond du Lac Gas and Grocery, growing your own in the garden, or harvesting from the land.

Two different plants are grown for tobacco, nicotiana spp. and Lobelia spp. Jeff Savage, Fond du Lac Museum curator and gitigaan grower gives seeds and plants of nicotiana rustica every spring to the Fond du Lac Gitigaan program. Jeff cautions, “When gathering your own plants

for tobacco, it is good to take what you need and leave some behind.” His hope is to see community members using more tobacco grown from the gitigaan (garden). The plants can be found right here at Fond du Lac, usually on forest edges, wetlands, or by lakes and ponds; sometimes in your backyard.

A common way of using asemaa was to create apaakozigan (kinnikinnik) using the inner bark of red willow with other medicinal plants, such as the leaves of bearberry. Sumac, mullein, cedar, sweet grass, and sage are other common plants used in apaakozigan. A quick search of Daniel Moerman’s ethno botany database, found at <http://herb.umd.umich.edu/> revealed over 300 medicinal uses of nicotiana spp. and lobelia spp. by tribes

of North America.

Les Northrup, a Fond du Lac Elder, says he didn’t always use tobacco for prayer and smudging, but he did use it as a tea with yarrow. In 1965, Les was advised by a spiritual adviser to use the tobacco in the “red pouch” for ceremony and at funerals. Les said the convenience of buying tobacco at the store is what keeps many from going out to harvest their



Nicotiana

own materials for ceremonial asemaa.

For more information on using tobacco in a good way you could bring some asemaa to an Elder in the community; asking in this respectable way could provide knowledge of harvesting and growing your own asemaa and apaakozigan. Miigwech.

Upcoming Events:

Sign up to the 13 Moons listserv for the latest information on workshops and events by emailing thirteenmoons@fdlrez.com. Don’t forget to check us out on Facebook! 13 Moons Ashi niswi giizisoog

This page addresses culture, ecology, and natural resource management. Thirteen Moons is the Fond du Lac Tribal College Extension Program and is a collaboration of Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, Fond du Lac Resource Management, and University of Minnesota Extension.