

# Language Learning

## *Plant names and the language of place*

### Plant Species Information Cards



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#### **Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*)**

**Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) name:** Wáhta

**Description:** The sugar maple is a large deciduous tree known for its vibrant fall colours and its role in producing maple syrup. It has a dense crown and smooth, greyish-brown bark when young, which becomes furrowed with age. Leaves are typically 5-lobed and have a distinct shape. Native to North America.

**Gift:** Sugar maples give people their sap which can be refined into maple syrup, a valuable and beloved food source. Their foliage provides shade in the summer and their changing colours in the fall attract tourists who want to admire the beauty of the maple.

**Habitat:** Prefers well-drained, moist, and fertile soils, commonly found in hardwood forests. It thrives in areas with cold winters and warm summers, often in the understory of mature forests.

**Pronunciation:**



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#### **Eastern White Pine (*Pinus strobus*)**

**Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) name:** Tionerahtase'kó:wa

**Description:** The eastern white pine is a tall conifer with soft, bluish-green needles grouped in bundles of five. Its bark is smooth and greenish-brown when young, maturing to a darker, rough texture. The tree produces long, slender cones. Native to North America.

**Gift:** The eastern white pine grows tall and dense, offering a protective habitat for birds, bugs, and small mammals. White pines use their extensive root system to prevent soil erosion. At the end of their lives, eastern white pines can become a strong timber that is used in construction.

**Habitat:** Grows best in well-drained sandy or loamy soils with adequate moisture. It is commonly found in mixed forests and can tolerate a range of soil types but prefers cooler climates and full sun.

**Pronunciation:**





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#### **Common Milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*)**

**Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) name:** Tsikenetshehwén:ta

**Description:** Common milkweed is a perennial herbaceous plant with broad, oblong leaves and clusters of pink to purplish flowers. It produces a milky sap and distinctive seed pods that release silky seeds. Native to North America.

**Gift:** The common milkweed is best known as the sole food source for monarch butterfly larvae, but their nectar also supports many other pollinators such as hummingbirds and moths. The floss inside the milkweed pods is buoyant, water repellent and oil absorbent. It has been used in the production of life jackets and to help clean up oil spills. Different parts of the milkweed have been used as remedies for inflammation, a cough, and even warts. When harvested and cooked just right, milkweed is edible. Otherwise, it will induce vomiting, making it a prehistoric form of poison control.

**Habitat:** Prefers full sun and thrives in a variety of soil types, including sandy, loamy, and clay soils. It is often found in fields, meadows, and along roadsides, favouring well-drained sites.

**Pronunciation:**



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#### **Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*)**

**Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) name:** Okòn:ra

**Description:** The red oak is a large deciduous tree with pointed lobed leaves that turn red in the fall. Its bark is dark grey and ridged, and it produces acorns that are a key food source for wildlife. Native to North America.

**Gift:** The oak tree offers up its acorns as a food source for other relations such as deer, squirrels, and birds. Their large trunks can also accommodate hollows which become homes for bats, birds, bugs and small mammals. In the fall, the oaks drop their leaves which decompose, improving the soil quality.

**Habitat:** Prefers well-drained, acidic soils, commonly found in mixed hardwood forests. It thrives in areas with full sun to partial shade and is often found on slopes and upland areas.

#### **Pronunciation:**





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#### **Plantain (*Plantago rugelii*)**

**Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) name:** Atenhnéha

**Description:** Plantain is a perennial herb with broad, oval leaves that grow in a rosette at the base. The plant produces slender spikes of small, inconspicuous flowers. It is known for its medicinal properties and is often used in herbal remedies. Native to North America.

**Gift:** The plantain gives its leaves to remedy a wide variety of ailments. It is anti-inflammatory and helps repair skin tissue. It helps with minor wounds and burns, insect bites and stings, and irritations from other plants. Their strong roots mean they can grow in compacted areas with lots of foot traffic and help aerate the soil for other species to grow.

**Habitat:** Grows best in compacted, disturbed soils and can thrive in a range of conditions, including full sun and partial shade. It is commonly found in lawns, gardens, roadsides, and other disturbed areas.

**Pronunciation:**



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#### **Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*)**

**Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) name:** Kén:reks aotáhson

**Description:** Mullein is a biennial plant with a tall, erect stem and large, woolly leaves. In its second year, it produces a dense spike of small, yellow flowers. The leaves and flowers are often used in herbal medicine. Introduced to North America.

**Gift:** Mullein is often made into tea and is used to treat respiratory issues such as bronchitis. Mullein makes coughs more productive, helping the body to expel more mucus. It also helps the soil retain moisture and provides a microhabitat for insects.

**Habitat:** Prefers dry, sandy, or gravelly soils and full sun. It is commonly found in disturbed areas such as roadsides, fields, and open, rocky places.

#### **Pronunciation:**





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#### **White Clover (*Trifolium repens*)**

**Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) name:** Tionerahtó:ken katsi'tsarà:ken

**Description:** Clover is a perennial herb with three leaflets and small, globe-like flower clusters that can be white, red, or pink. Introduced to North America.

**Gift:** Clover has the special ability to fix nitrogen in the soil. This means, they take nitrogen from the atmosphere and convert it into a form that plants can use, making the soil around them more fertile. Most other plants can only get nutrients from the soil. Clover flowers are also beloved by pollinators such as bees.

**Habitat:** Thrives in well-drained, fertile soils and prefers full sun to partial shade. It is commonly found in lawns, fields, and pastures, often in areas with moderate moisture.

#### **Pronunciation:**



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#### **White Birch (*Betula papyrifera*)**

**Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) name:** Watenakè:tarons

**Description:** The white birch is a deciduous tree with distinctive white bark that peels in paper-like layers. It has ovate leaves with serrated edges and produces small, cylindrical catkins. Native to North America.

**Gift:** White birch is known for its beauty and is therefore used in some traditional Indigenous crafts such as in jewellery-making. The bark is waterproof, flexible and tends not to rot like other types of bark. This made it a great material to use in baskets and canoes before the invention of more modern materials.

**Habitat:** Prefers well-drained, sandy, or loamy soils and full sun. It is commonly found in mixed forests, often in areas with moist soils such as along stream banks and in forest clearings.

#### **Pronunciation:**





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Peter O'Connor aka anemoneprojectors from Stevenage, United Kingdom, CC BY-SA 2.0

#### **Cattail (*Typha latifolia*)**

**Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) name:** Ohsáhrhe

**Description:** Cattail is a perennial aquatic plant with long, narrow leaves and distinctive brown, cylindrical flower spikes. It is commonly found in wetlands and along the edges of ponds and streams. Native to North America.

**Gift:** Cattails work to improve water quality by filtering pollutants and providing habitat for many wetland species. Almost every part of the cattail is edible.

**Habitat:** Prefers wet, marshy soils and shallow water. It thrives in full sun and is commonly found in freshwater wetlands, marshes, and along the edges of lakes and rivers.

#### **Pronunciation:**



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#### **Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*)**

**Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) name:** Otsihkwes

**Description:** Queen Anne's lace, also known as wild carrot, is a biennial plant with feathery leaves and flat-topped clusters of small white flowers. It has a carrot-like taproot that even smells like carrots. Introduced to North America.

**Gift:** The delicate flowers on Queen Anne's lace attract all kinds of beneficial insects such as the swallowtail caterpillar and adult bees. Although it's an invasive plant, the seeds are tasty snacks for native birds.

**Habitat:** Prefers well-drained, dry to moderately moist soils and full sun. It is commonly found in fields, meadows, and along roadsides, often in disturbed areas.

#### **Pronunciation:**





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#### **Daisy (*Bellis perennis*)**

**Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) name:** Konwákeri

**Description:** Daisy is a perennial herb with simple, spoon-shaped leaves and white petals surrounding a yellow centre. It is a common wildflower often seen in lawns and gardens. Introduced in North America.

**Gift:** Daisies are an edible plant high in Vitamin C. They're also a beloved ornamental plant found in residential gardens and beautifying public spaces. They attract pollinators, indirectly contributing to the health of local ecosystems.

**Habitat:** Prefers well-drained soils and full sun to partial shade. It is commonly found in meadows, lawns, and gardens, often in areas with moderate moisture.

#### **Pronunciation:**



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#### **Poison Ivy (*Toxicodendron radicans*)**

**Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) name:** lakohontarástha

**Description:** Poison ivy is a perennial plant that can grow as a vine or shrub. It has trifoliate (three-parted) leaves that change colour with the seasons and produces clusters of small, greenish-white berries. Poison ivy is also known for causing an uncomfortable rash. Avoid touching this plant if found. Native to North America.

**Gift:** Despite its reputation as a menace, poison ivy provides food for wildlife who are immune to its oils. Birds, especially, are fond of the berries given by this plant. Poison ivy is a pioneer species, meaning, it is one of the first plants to grow in areas recovering from events such as a fire or construction project. They cover disturbed areas and prime the soil for other plants to grow in the future.

**Habitat:** Prefers well-drained soils and can thrive in a variety of habitats, including forests, fields, and along riverbanks. It prefers partial shade to full sun.

**Pronunciation:**





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#### **Raspberry (*Rubus strigosus*)**

**Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) name:** Skanekwen'tará:nen

**Description:** Raspberry is a perennial shrub with thorny stems, compound leaves with three to seven leaflets, and red aggregate fruits. It is commonly cultivated for its edible berries. Native to North America.

**Gift:** Raspberry bushes provide delicious berries for humans and other creatures. The density of their thorn-covered branches provide birds and small animals with refuge from larger predators.

**Habitat:** Prefers well-drained, fertile soils and full sun to partial shade. It is commonly found in forest edges, clearings, and disturbed areas.

**Pronunciation:**



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#### **Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*)**

**Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) name:** Ken'niiohontéscha

**Description:** Wild strawberry is a low-growing perennial plant with trifoliate leaves, white flowers, and small, red, sweet fruits. It spreads by runners and is native to North America.

**Gift:** Wild strawberry plants produce tiny sweet berries that are enjoyed by humans and other wildlife. The plant's low-growing tendency helps prevent soil erosion and improves ground cover.

**Habitat:** Prefers well-drained, sandy or loamy soils and full sun to partial shade. It is commonly found in meadows, woodland edges, and open fields.

**Pronunciation:**





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Katya from Moscow, Russia, CC BY-SA 2.0

#### **Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*)**

**Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) name:** Tará:kwi

**Description:** Sumac is a deciduous shrub or small tree with compound leaves, clusters of small greenish or white flowers, and red, fuzzy fruit clusters. It is known for its vibrant fall colours and velvety twigs. Native to North America.

**Gift:** Staghorn sumac beautifies an area with its vibrant red fruit and large leaves. Its fruit can be used to make tea or even spices. Their spreading root systems also help stabilize the soil, preventing erosion.

**Habitat:** Prefers well-drained, dry to moderately moist soils and full sun to partial shade. It is commonly found in open fields, roadsides, and forest edges.

**Pronunciation:**



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#### **Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)**

**Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) name:** Nikakonhsà:'a

**Description:** Dandelion is a perennial herb with bright yellow flower heads and deeply toothed leaves that grow in a rosette. It produces a puffball seed head that disperses seeds by wind. Introduced in North America.

**Gift:** The whole part of the dandelion is edible and provides nutritional benefits such as Vitamins A, B, C and D. They also contain essential minerals such as iron, zinc and potassium. People use dandelions to make teas, salads, jelly and even wine. Dandelions are truly collaborative, using their long taproots to aerate soil and bring nutrients to the surface so they can be used by other plants with shorter root systems.

**Habitat:** Prefers well-drained, fertile soils and full sun. It is highly adaptable and can grow in a variety of soil types, including disturbed areas such as lawns, gardens, and roadsides.

#### **Pronunciation:**

