

**Meeting Date:** Wednesday, March 4, 2026

**Prepared By:** Jess Hall, Natural Resource, Sustainability, & Environment Specialist

## **Subject: Discussion of Foraging on City Property**

### Background

Foraging, defined as the taking, harvesting, or collecting of berries, nuts, mushrooms, and wild plants, has a long history in Minnesota. For this discussion, maple tree tapping will be included when discussing foraging.

Foraging served as a source for food and medicine for Minnesota's indigenous inhabitants. As successive waves of settlers and immigrants moved to Minnesota, each brought their own foraging traditions. Most recently, the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic led to an increase in foraging among Minnesotans. Foraging is deeply rooted in the many cultures that make up Minnesota, both historically and today, yet it does not have the same recognition in the state constitution as similar practices like hunting and fishing do. For many, foraging goes beyond an activity and becomes an experience or even a facet of life.

West St. Paul does not currently have any guidelines, policies, etc. in place regarding sustainable foraging on city lands. This was brought to our attention when approached by a resident interested in tapping trees for maple syrup. In the past, staff have considered requests on a case-by-case basis but are hoping to set clear guidelines and procedures moving forward.

There is currently a sustainable foraging task force at the state level that is writing guidance for state managed lands such as state forests and parks. It is time to consider how we can adapt these policies for local public lands.

### Requests

Environmental Committee should:

- Review the MN Sustainable Foraging Task Force prior meeting agendas, notes, and resources here: <https://www.lcc.mn.gov/foraging/meetings.html>
- Consider sustainable foraging best practices and rank importance in developing guidelines
- Discuss any concerns with allowing foraging on city property.
- Brainstorm educational materials and consider aiding in development of these materials for residents.