



## *The Weekly Historical Note*

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### *Native Tobacco*

*This article is adapted from "Planting Oyu-kwa-u-w# (The Native tobacco)", by Randy Cornelius.*

#### **Planting Instructions:**

Native Tobacco should be planted in a separate location from vegetable or flower gardens because it is a very hardy plant and will expand to cover large areas. Plant in a sunny to partially shady area. It is a common practice to plant after a new moon for tobacco and all other plants that bear above the ground. Root crops are usually planted following a full moon. Cover seeds with about ¼ inch of fine soil and water thoroughly. Fish fertilizer can be used, or ambitious gardeners can bury a whole fish underneath each spot where the tobacco will be planted. Plants should be spaced about a foot apart and have at least a foot between each row.

#### **Growth and Harvest:**

It is recommended that tobacco plants be fertilized about every two to three weeks. Keep the growing area well weeded and water regularly when the ground is dry. Flowers will begin to develop which are commonly yellow in color, however, blue and white flowers can be found as well. Harvesting of the Tobacco leaves can begin when the "sand leaves" or the leaves closest to the ground begin to turn color. Leavers should be harvested before they turn yellow, or when they begin to get "age spots" on them. Every time leaves are harvested, they will be harvested from the lowest leaves on the plant. The result should be that the plant will begin to look like a bush. The flowers will eventually produce seeds and the plant will grow again the following year. In the spring, it may be necessary to selectively thin the seedlings to allow the new plants enough room to grow and develop to their full potential.

"Now one of the things that I have been told," writes Randy Cornelius, "about the native tobacco is that not everybody has the ability to grow it. Over the years I have given people seeds and for many of them the plant will not grow. I've even given tobacco plants to people and the plants would die on them. So don't get discouraged if it doesn't grow for you, it's not meant to be. Maybe you know of someone with a kind heart that has a "green" thumb that you could give the seeds to and see if the tobacco will grow for them. They say that the Creator only chooses certain people. It's a gift."



“In our Creation Story, it tells us that the native tobacco originally came from the sky world, the land of our Creator. In this land there is no suffering of any kind. The mere thought of thinking of something negative is unknown to the people who



live in this world. There's no death, hunger, disease, or sadness of any kind. It's Utopian. For this reason we look at the tobacco as a very pure and sacred plant, because it originated from a place where any form of evil or negativity is nonexistent. We don't know how this plant originated or how this land came to be.”

“We were instructed to burn the native tobacco whenever there's any kind of a problem that we have. In a sincere and honest way talk directly to our Creator for whatever it is that we are seeking. It's our belief that when we communicate to the Creator in this manner, the spirit of the tobacco is released and begins its journey back home. The elders say that the smoke will pierce the sky and carry whatever the message is that we are asking of. Even if we just put our thoughts into the tobacco smoke, our message will be heard. The Creator has helpers who will assist and guide us. The Creator never intended for us to inhale the smoke.”

“We do know that the commercial tobacco that is part of the tobacco industry and bought in stores and used for smoking or chewing is manmade. It's a hybrid manmade tobacco. What man has done, is he's taken the native tobacco and through cross breeding, he has created a plant that is larger and produces bigger leaves. There are a number of additives and chemicals that are also added to it. In their eyes, they have created a tobacco plant that is better than the native plant. What they fail to understand is that you can't improve on any of the many other gifts that originated from the sky world or anything that our Creator has created. To our people it's un-conceivable to think that a mere human being can improve on something that came from such a pure place or created by our Creator. For this reason it is the belief of the Iroquoian people that if we were to use this tobacco in our ceremonies, the smoke would stay in this world because this is where it was created.”

Picture from: <http://hortiplex.gardenweb.com/plants/p1/gw1023766.html>, accessed on 06/22/2009.