

*U.S. MARINE CORP.  
WILD FOOD  
SURVIVAL*

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## US MARINE CORP WILD FOOD SURVIVAL

*After water, man's most urgent requirement is food. In contemplating virtually any hypothetical survival situation, the mind immediately turns to thoughts of food. Unless the situation occurs in an arid environment, even water, which is more important to maintaining body functions, will almost always follow food in our initial thoughts. The survivor must remember that the three essentials of survival - water, food, and shelter - are prioritised according to the estimate of the actual situation. This estimate must not only be timely but accurate as well. Some situations may well dictate that shelter precede both food and water.*

### ANIMALS FOR FOOD

Unless you have the chance to take large game, concentrate your efforts on the smaller animals, due to their abundance. The smaller animal species are also easier to prepare.

You must not know all the animal species that are suitable as food. Relatively few are poisonous, and they make a smaller list to remember. What is important is to learn the habits and behavioural patterns of classes of animals. For example, animals that are excellent choices for trapping, those that inhabit a particular range and occupy a den or nest, those that have somewhat fixed feeding areas, and those that have trails leading from one area to another. Larger, herding animals, such as elk or caribou, roam vast areas and are somewhat more difficult to trap. Also, you must understand the food choices of a particular species.

You can, with relatively few exceptions, eat anything that crawls, swims, walks, or flies. The first obstacle is overcoming your natural aversion to a particular food source.

Historically, people in starvation situations have resorted to eating everything imaginable for nourishment. A person who ignores an otherwise healthy food source due to a personal bias, or because he feels it is unappetising, is risking his own survival. Although it may prove difficult at first, a survivor must eat what is available to maintain his health.

#### Insects

The most abundant life-form on earth, insects are easily caught. Insects provide 65 to 80 percent protein compared to 20 percent for beef. This fact makes insects an important, if not overly appetising, food source.

Insects to avoid include all adults that sting or bite, hairy or brightly coloured insects, and caterpillars and insects that have a pungent odour. Also avoid spiders and common disease carriers such as ticks, flies, and mosquitoes.

Rotting logs lying on the ground are excellent places to look for a variety of insects including ants, termites, beetles, and grubs, which are beetle larvae. Do not overlook insect nests on or in the ground. Grassy areas, such as fields, are good areas to search because the insects are easily seen. Stones, boards, or other materials lying on the

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ground provide the insects with good nesting sites. Check these sites. Insect larvae are also edible. Insects such as beetles and grasshoppers that have a hard outer shell will have parasites. Cook them before eating. Remove any wings and barbed legs also. You can eat most insects raw. The taste varies from one species to another. Wood grubs are bland, while some species of ants store honey in their bodies, giving them a sweet taste.

You can grind a collection of insects into a paste. You can mix them with edible vegetation.

You can cook them to improve their taste.

### Worms

Worms (*Annelidea*) are an excellent protein source. Dig for them in damp humus soil or watch for them on the ground after a rain. After capturing them, drop them into clean, potable water for a few minutes. The worms will naturally purge or wash themselves out, after which you can eat them raw.

### Crustaceans

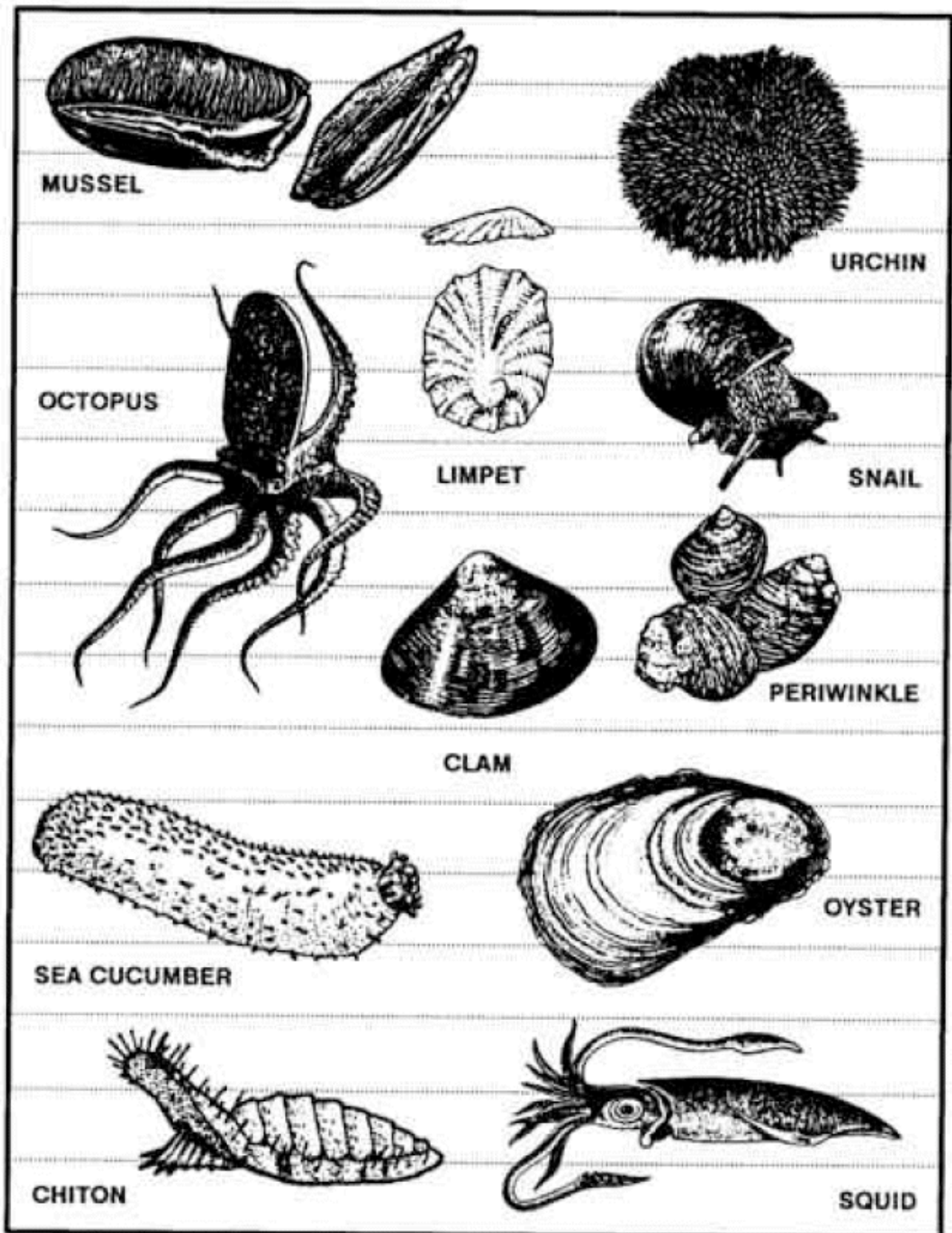
Freshwater shrimp range in size from 0.25 centimetre up to 2.5 centimetres. They can form rather large colonies in mats of floating algae or in mud bottoms of ponds and lakes. Crayfish are akin to marine lobsters and crabs. You can distinguish them by their hard exoskeleton and five pairs of legs, the front pair having oversized pincers. Crayfish are active at night, but you can locate them in the daytime by looking under and around stones in streams. You can also find them by looking in the soft mud near the chimney like breathing holes of their nests. You can catch crayfish by tying bits of offal or internal organs to a string. When the crayfish grabs the bait, pull it to shore before it has a chance to release the bait.

You find saltwater lobsters, crabs, and shrimp from the surf's edge out to water 10 meters deep. Shrimp may come to a light at night where you can scoop them up with a net. You can catch lobsters and crabs with a baited trap or a baited hook. Crabs will come to bait placed at the edge of the surf, where you can trap or net them. Lobsters and crabs are nocturnal and caught best at night.

### Mollusks

This class includes octopuses and freshwater and saltwater shellfish such as snails, clams, mussels, bivalves, barnacles, periwinkles, chitons, and sea urchins (**Figure 1-1**).

You find bivalves similar to our freshwater mussel and terrestrial and aquatic snails worldwide under all water conditions.



**Figure 1-1. Edible molluscs**

River snails or freshwater periwinkles are plentiful in rivers, streams, and lakes of northern coniferous forests. These snails may be pencil point or globular in shape. In fresh water, look for molluscs in the shallows, especially in water with a sandy or muddy bottom. Look for the narrow trails they leave in the mud or for the dark elliptical slit of their open valves.

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Near the sea, look in the tidal pools and the wet sand. Rocks along beaches or extending as reefs into deeper water often bear clinging shellfish. Snails and limpets cling to rocks and seaweed from the low water mark upward. Large snails, called chitons, adhere tightly to rocks above the surf line.

Mussels usually form dense colonies in rock pools, on logs, or at the base of boulders.

### CAUTION

**Mussels may be poisonous in tropical zones during the summer!**

Steam, boil, or bake molluscs in the shell. They make excellent stews in combination with greens and tubers.

### CAUTION

**Do not eat shellfish that are not covered by water at high tide!**

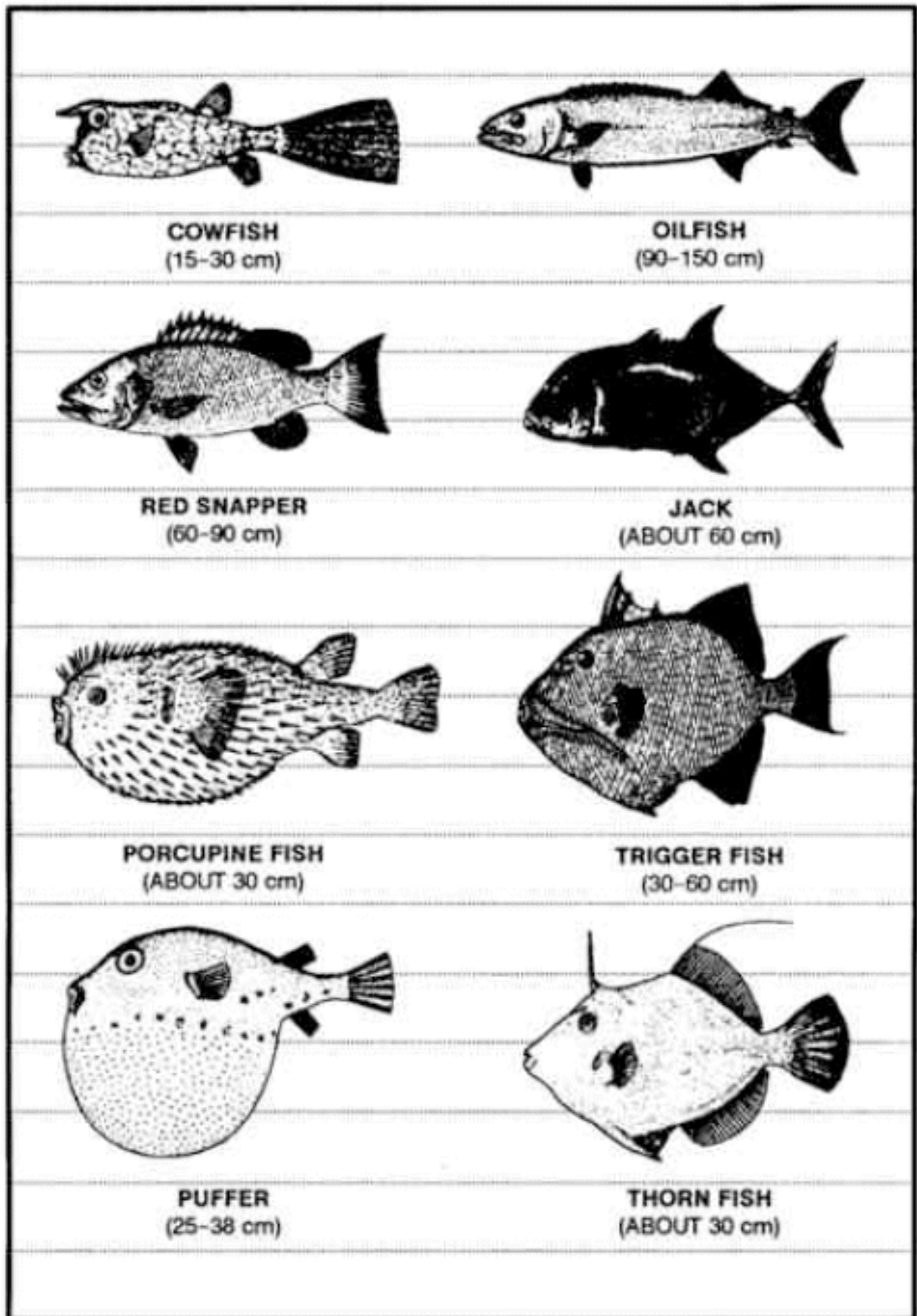
## Fish

Fish represent a good source of protein and fat. They offer some distinct advantages to the survivor or evader. They are usually more abundant than mammal wildlife, and the ways to get them are silent. To be successful at catching fish, you must know their habits. For instance, fish tend to feed heavily before a storm. Fish are not likely to feed after a storm when the water is muddy and swollen. Light often attracts fish at night. When there is a heavy current, fish will rest in places where there is an eddy, such as near rocks. Fish will also gather where there are deep pools, under overhanging brush, and in and around submerged foliage, logs, or other objects that offer them shelter.

There are no poisonous freshwater fish. However, the catfish species has sharp, needle like protrusions on its dorsal fins and barbels. These can inflict painful puncture wounds that quickly become infected. Cook all freshwater fish to kill parasites. Also cook saltwater fish caught within a reef or within the influence of a freshwater source as a precaution. Any marine life obtained farther out in the sea will not contain parasites because of the saltwater environment. You can eat these raw.

Certain saltwater species of fish have poisonous flesh. In some species the poison occurs seasonally in others, it is permanent. Examples of poisonous saltwater fish are the porcupine fish, triggerfish, cowfish, thorn fish, oilfish, red snapper, jack, and puffer (**Figure 1-2**). The barracuda, while not actually poisonous itself, may transmit ciguatera (fish poisoning) if eaten raw.





*Figure 1-2 Fish with poisonous flesh*

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### Amphibians

Frogs and salamanders are easily found around bodies of fresh water. Frogs seldom move from the safety of the water's edge. At the first sign of danger, they plunge into the water and bury themselves in the mud and debris. There are few poisonous species of frogs. Avoid any brightly coloured frog or one that has a distinct "X" mark on its back. Do not confuse toads with frogs. You normally find toads in drier environments. Several species of toads secrete a poisonous substance through their skin as a defence against attack.

Therefore, to avoid poisoning, do not handle or eat toads.

Salamanders are nocturnal. The best time to catch them is at night using a light. They can range in size from a few centimetres to well over 60 centimetres in length. Look in water around rocks and mud banks for salamanders.

### Reptiles

Reptiles are a good protein source and relatively easy to catch. You should cook them, but in an emergency, you can eat them raw. Their raw flesh may transmit parasites, but because reptiles are cold-blooded, they do not carry the blood diseases of the warm blooded animals.

The box turtle is a commonly encountered turtle that you should not eat. It feeds on poisonous mushrooms and may build up a highly toxic poison in its flesh. Cooking does not destroy this toxin. Avoid the hawksbill turtle, found in the Atlantic Ocean, because of its poisonous thorax gland. Poisonous snakes, alligators, crocodiles, and large sea turtles present obvious hazards to the survivor.

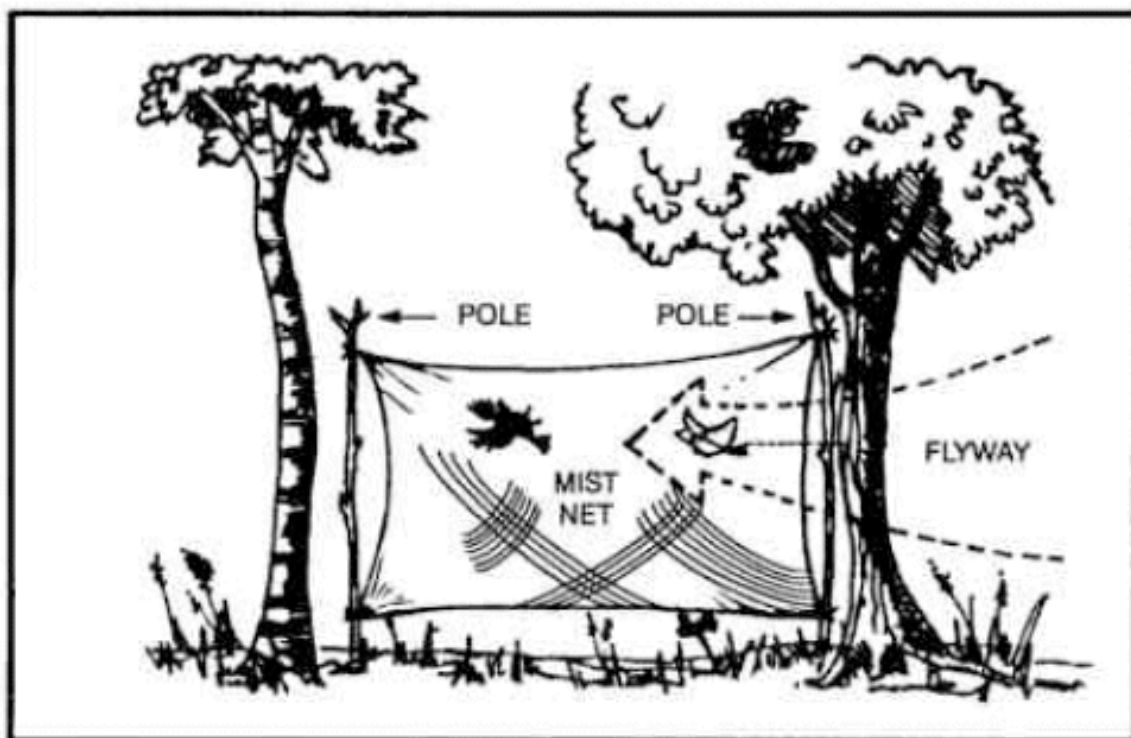
### Birds

All species of birds are edible, although the flavour will vary considerably. You may skin fish-eating birds to improve their taste. As with any wild animal, you must understand birds' common habits to have a realistic chance of capturing them. You can take pigeons, as well as some other species, from their roost at night by hand. During the nesting season, some species will not leave the nest even when approached. Knowing where and when the birds nest makes catching them easier (**Figure 1-3**). Birds tend to have regular flyways going from the roost to a feeding area, to water, and so forth. Careful observation should reveal where these flyways are and indicate good areas for catching birds in nets stretched across the flyways (**Figure 1-4**). Roosting sites and water holes are some of the most promising areas for trapping or snaring.

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Types of Birds	Frequent Nesting Places	Nesting Periods
Inland birds	Trees, woods, or fields	Spring and early summer in temperate and arctic regions; year round in the tropics
Cranes and herons	Mangrove swamps or high trees near water	Spring and early summer
Some species of owls	High trees	Late December through March
Ducks, geese, and swans	Tundra areas near ponds, rivers, or lakes	Spring and early summer in arctic regions
Some sea birds	Sandbars or low sand islands	Spring and early summer in temperate and arctic regions
Gulls, auks, murres, and cormorants	Steep rocky coasts	Spring and early summer in temperate and arctic regions

**Figure 1-3 Bird nesting places**



**Figure 1-4 Catching birds in a net**

Nesting birds present another food source - eggs. Remove all but two or three eggs from the clutch, marking the ones that you leave. The bird will continue to lay more eggs to fill the clutch. Continue removing the fresh eggs, leaving the ones you marked.



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### Mammals

Mammals are excellent protein sources and, for Americans, the most tasty food source. There are some drawbacks to obtaining mammals. In a hostile environment, the enemy may detect any traps or snares placed on land. The amount of injury an animal can inflict is in direct proportion to its size. All mammals have teeth and nearly all will bite in self defence.

Even a squirrel can inflict a serious wound and any bite presents a serious risk of infection. Also, a mother can be extremely aggressive in defence of her young. Any animal with no route of escape will fight when cornered.

All mammals are edible; however, the polar bear and bearded seal have toxic levels of vitamin A in their livers. The platypus, native to Australia and Tasmania, is an egg laying, semi aquatic mammal that has poisonous glands. Scavenging mammals, such as the opossum, may carry diseases.

## TRAPS AND SNARES

For an unarmed survivor or evader, or when the sound of a rifle shot could be a problem, trapping or snaring wild game is a good alternative. Several well-placed traps have the potential to catch much more game than a man with a rifle is likely to shoot. To be effective with any type of trap or snare, you must--

- Be familiar with the species of animal you intend to catch.
- Be capable of constructing a proper trap.
- Not alarm the prey by leaving signs of your presence.

There are no catchall traps you can set for all animals. You must determine what species are in a given area and set your traps specifically with those animals in mind. Look for the following:

- Runs and trails.
- Tracks.
- Droppings.
- Chewed or rubbed vegetation.
- Nesting or roosting sites.
- Feeding and watering areas.

Position your traps and snares where there is proof that animals pass through. You must determine if it is a "run" or a "trail." A trail will show signs of use by several species and will be rather distinct. A run is usually smaller and less distinct and will only contain signs of one species. You may construct a perfect snare, but it will not catch anything if haphazardly placed in the woods. Animals have bedding areas, water holes, and feeding areas with trails leading from one to another. You must place snares and traps around these areas to be effective.

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For an evader in a hostile environment, trap and snare concealment is important. It is equally important, however, not to create a disturbance that will alarm the animal and cause it to avoid the trap. Therefore, if you must dig, remove all fresh dirt from the area. Most animals will instinctively avoid a pitfall-type trap. Prepare the various parts of a trap or snare away from the site, carry them in, and set them up. Such actions make it easier to avoid disturbing the local vegetation, thereby alerting the prey. Do not use freshly cut, live vegetation to construct a trap or snare. Freshly cut vegetation will "bleed" sap that has an odour the prey will be able to smell. It is an alarm signal to the animal.

You must remove or mask the human scent on and around the trap you set. Although birds do not have a developed sense of smell, nearly all mammals depend on smell even more than on sight. Even the slightest human scent on a trap will alarm the prey and cause it to avoid the area. Actually removing the scent from a trap is difficult but masking it is relatively easy. Use the fluid from the gall and urine bladders of previous kills. Do not use human urine. Mud, particularly from an area with plenty of rotting vegetation, is also good. Use it to coat your hands when handling the trap and to coat the trap when setting it. In nearly all parts of the world, animals know the smell of burned vegetation and smoke. It is only when a fire is actually burning that they become alarmed. Therefore, smoking the trap parts is an effective means to mask your scent. If one of the above techniques is not practical, and if time permits, allow a trap to weather for a few days and then set it. Do not handle a trap while it is weathering. When you position the trap, camouflage it as naturally as possible to prevent detection by the enemy and to avoid alarming the prey.

Traps or snares placed on a trail or run should use channellisation. To build a channel, construct a funnel-shaped barrier extending from the sides of the trail toward the trap, with the narrowest part nearest the trap. Channellisation should be inconspicuous to avoid alerting the prey. As the animal gets to the trap, it cannot turn left or right and continues into the trap. Few wild animals will back up, preferring to face the direction of travel. Channellisation does not have to be an impassable barrier. You only have to make it inconvenient for the animal to go over or through the barrier. For best effect, the channellisation should reduce the trail's width to just slightly wider than the targeted animal's body. Maintain this constriction at least as far back from the trap as the animal's body length, then begin the widening toward the mouth of the funnel.

### **Use of Bait**

Baiting a trap or snare increases your chances of catching an animal. When catching fish, you must bait nearly all the devices. Success with an unbaited trap depends on its placement in a good location. A baited trap can actually draw animals to it. The bait should be something the animal knows. This bait, however, should not be so readily available in the immediate area that the animal can get it close by. For example, baiting a trap with corn in the middle of a corn field would not be likely to work. Likewise, if corn is not grown in the region, a corn-baited trap may arouse an animal's curiosity and keep it alerted while it ponders the strange food. Under such circumstances it may not go for the bait. One bait that works well on small mammals is the peanut butter from a meal, ready-to-eat (MRE) ration. Salt is also a good bait. When using such baits, scatter bits of it around the trap to give the prey a chance to sample it and develop a craving for it. The animal will then overcome some of its caution before it gets to the trap. If you set and bait a trap for one species but another species takes the bait without being caught, try to determine what the animal was. Then set a proper trap for that animal, using the same bait.

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*Note: Once you have successfully trapped an animal, you will not only gain confidence in your ability, you also will have resupplied yourself with bait for several more traps.*

### Trap and Snare Construction

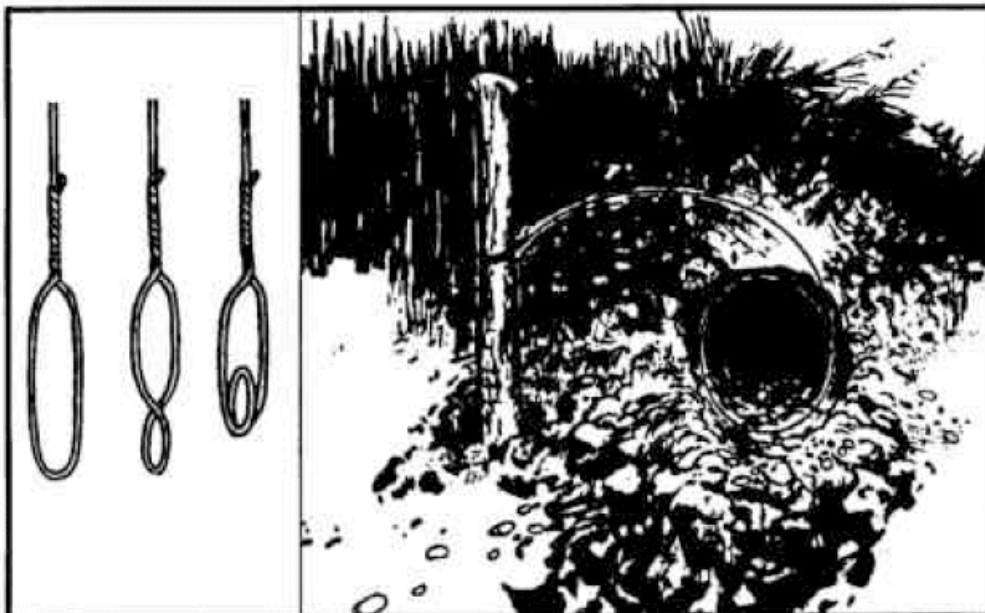
Traps and snares crush, choke, hang, or entangle the prey. A single trap or snare will commonly incorporate two or more of these principles. The mechanisms that provide power to the trap are almost always very simple. The struggling victim, the force of gravity, or a bent sapling's tension provides the power.

The heart of any trap or snare is the trigger. When planning a trap or snare, ask yourself how it should affect the prey, what is the source of power, and what will be the most efficient trigger. Your answers will help you devise a specific trap for a specific species.

Traps are designed to catch and hold or to catch and kill. Snares are traps that incorporate a noose to accomplish either function.

### Simple Snare

A simple snare (**Figure 1-5**) consists of a noose placed over a trail or den hole and attached to a firmly planted stake. If the noose is some type of cordage placed upright on a game trail, use small twigs or blades of grass to hold it up. Filaments from spider webs are excellent for holding nooses open. Make sure the noose is large enough to pass freely over the animal's head. As the animal continues to move, the noose tightens around its neck. The more the animal struggles, the tighter the noose gets. This type of snare usually does not kill the animal. If you use cordage, it may loosen enough to slip off the animal's neck. Wire is therefore the best choice for a simple snare.



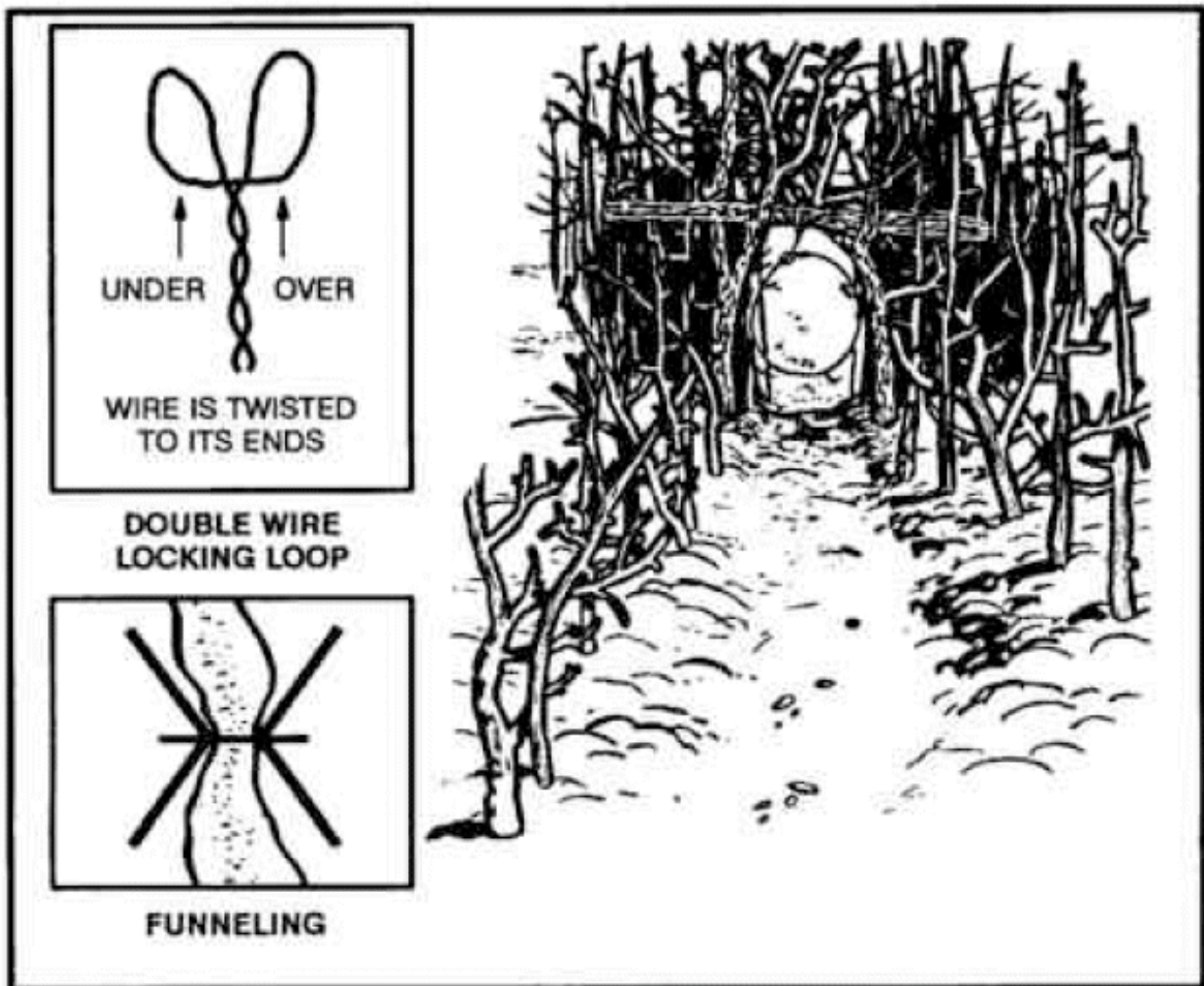
**Figure 1-5 Simple snare**

### Drag Noose

Use a drag noose on an animal run (**Figure 1-6**). Place forked sticks on either side of the run and lay a sturdy cross-member across them. Tie the noose to the cross-member and hang it at a height above the animal's head. (Nooses designed to catch by the head

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should never be low enough for the prey to step into with a foot.) As the noose tightens around the animal's neck, the animal pulls the cross-member from the forked sticks and drags it along. The surrounding vegetation quickly catches the cross-member and the animal becomes entangled.



*Figure 1-6 Drag snare*

### **Twitch-Up**

A twitch-up is a supple sapling, which, when bent over and secured with a triggering device, will provide power to a variety of snares. Select a hardwood sapling along the trail. A twitch-up will work much faster and with more force if you remove all the branches and foliage.

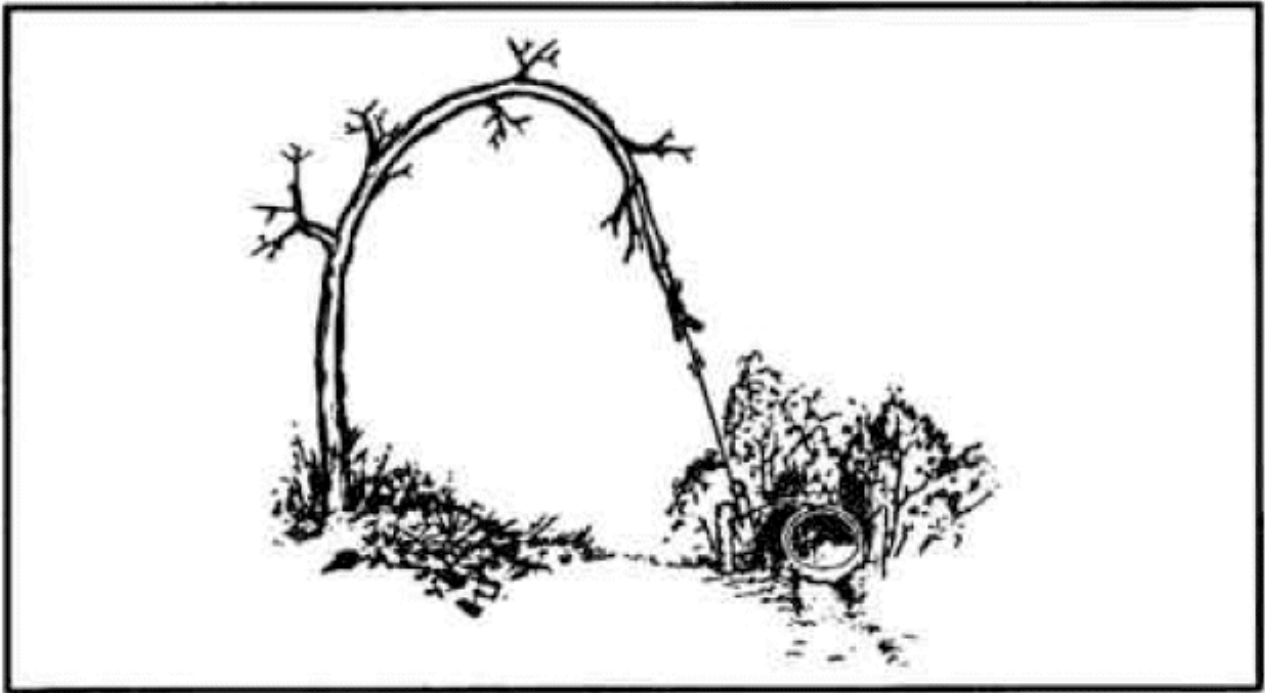
### **Twitch-Up Snare**

A simple twitch-up snare uses two forked sticks, each with a long and short leg (**Figure 1-7**). Bend the twitch-up and mark the trail below it. Drive the long leg of one forked stick firmly into the ground at that point. Ensure the cut on the short leg of this stick is parallel to

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the ground. Tie the long leg of the remaining forked stick to a piece of cordage secured to the twitch-up. Cut the short leg so that it catches on the short leg of the other forked stick. Extend a noose over the trail. Set the trap by bending the twitch-up and engaging the short legs of the forked sticks. When an animal catches its head in the noose, it pulls the forked sticks apart, allowing the twitch-up to spring up and hang the prey.

*Note: Do not use green sticks for the trigger. The sap that oozes out could glue them together.*

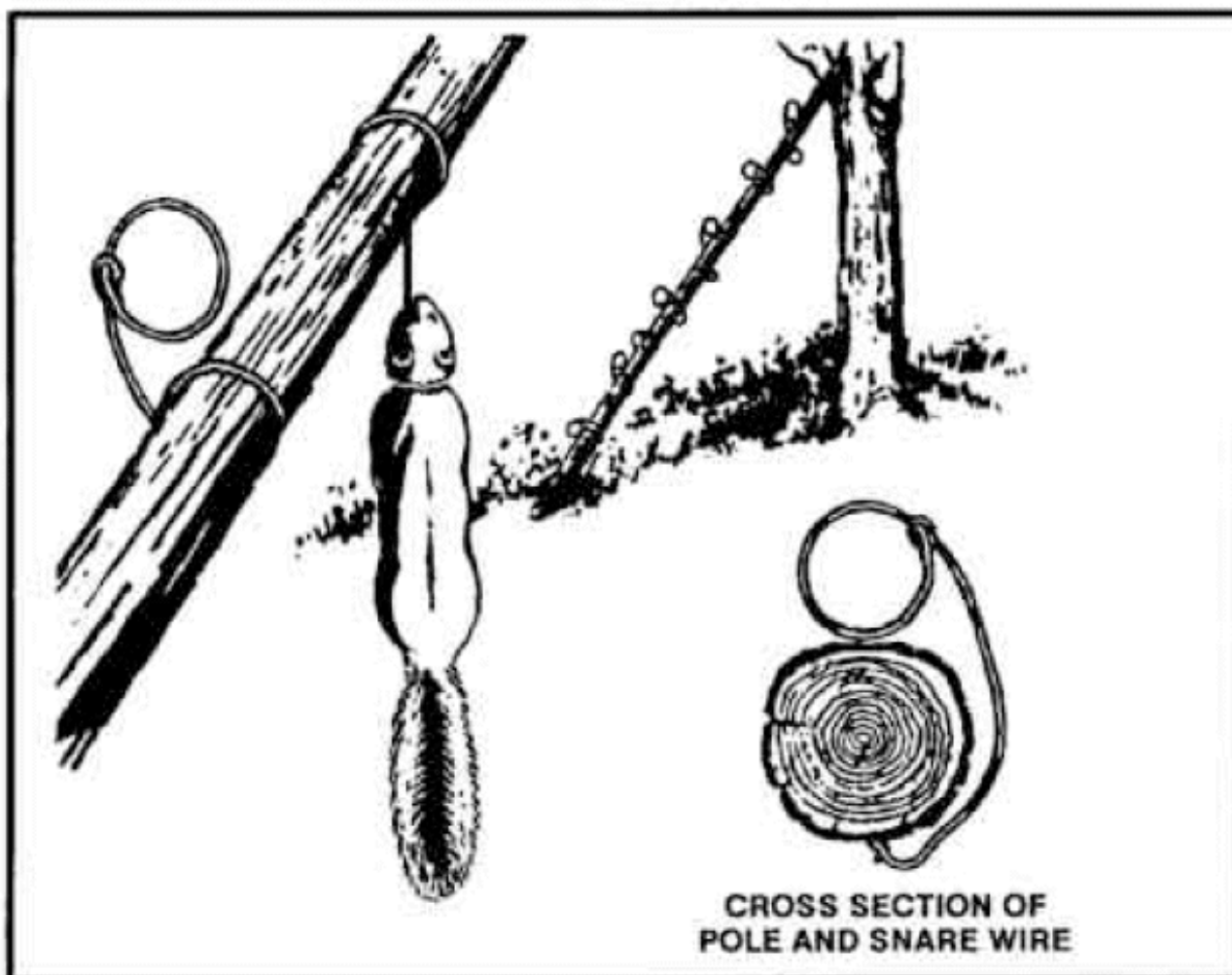


**Figure 1-7 Twitch-up snare**

### Squirrel Pole

A squirrel pole is a long pole placed against a tree in an area showing a lot of squirrel activity (**Figure 1-8**). Place several wire nooses along the top and sides of the pole so that a squirrel trying to go up or down the pole will have to pass through one or more of them. Position the nooses (5 to 6 centimetres in diameter) about 2.5 centimetres off the pole. Place the top and bottom wire nooses 45 centimetres from the top and bottom of the pole to prevent the squirrel from getting its feet on a solid surface. If this happens, the squirrel will chew through the wire. Squirrels are naturally curious. After an initial period of caution, they will try to go up or down the pole and will get caught in a noose. The struggling animal will soon fall from the pole and strangle. Other squirrels will soon follow and, in this way, you can catch several squirrels. You can emplace multiple poles to increase the catch.





*Figure 1-8 Squirrel pole*

### **Ojibwa Bird Pole**

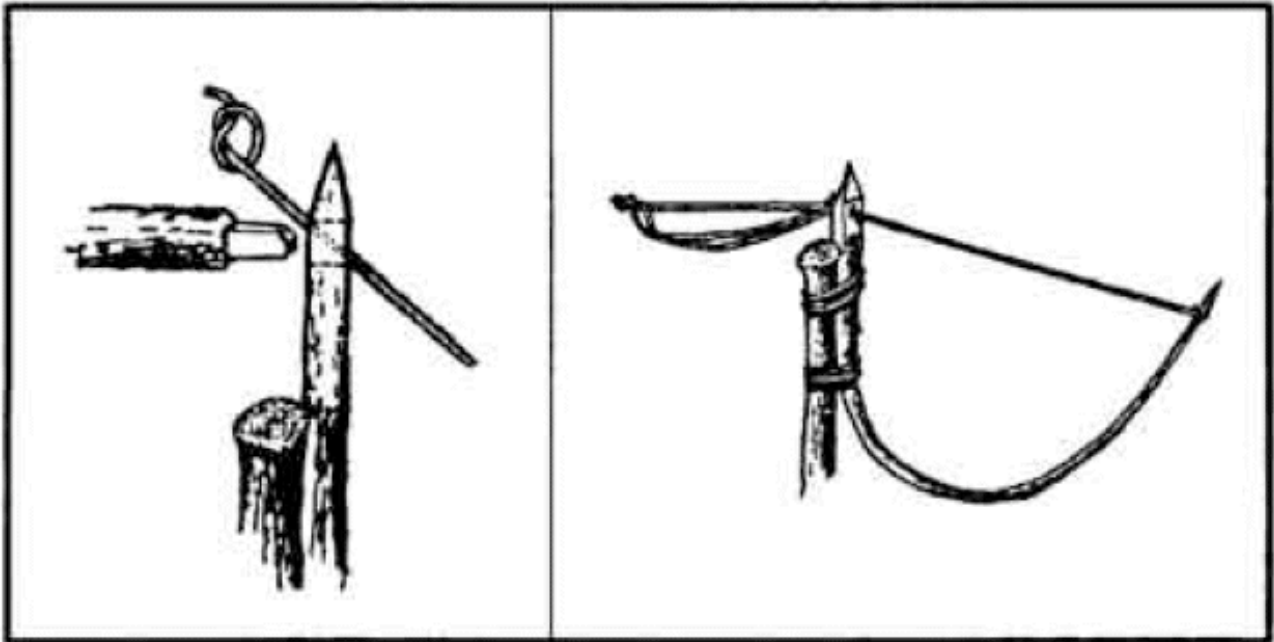
An Ojibwa bird pole is a snare used by native Americans for centuries (Figure 1-9). To be effective, place it in a relatively open area away from tall trees. For best results, pick a spot near feeding areas, dusting areas, or watering holes. Cut a pole 1.8 to 2.1 meters long and trim away all limbs and foliage. Do not use resinous wood such as pine. Sharpen the upper end to a point, then drill a small diameter hole 5 to 7.5 centimetres down from the top. Cut a small stick 10 to 15 centimetres long and shape one end so that it will almost fit into the hole. This is the perch. Plant the long pole in the ground with the pointed end up.

Tie a small weight, about equal to the weight of the targeted species, to a length of cordage. Pass the free end of the cordage through the hole, and tie a slip noose that covers the perch. Tie a single overhand knot in the cordage and place the perch against the hole.

Allow the cordage to slip through the hole until the overhand knot rests against the pole and the top of the perch. The tension of the overhand knot against the pole and perch will hold the perch in position. Spread the noose over the perch, ensuring it covers the perch and drapes over on both sides. Most birds prefer to rest on something above ground and will land on the perch. As soon as the bird lands, the perch will fall, releasing the overhand

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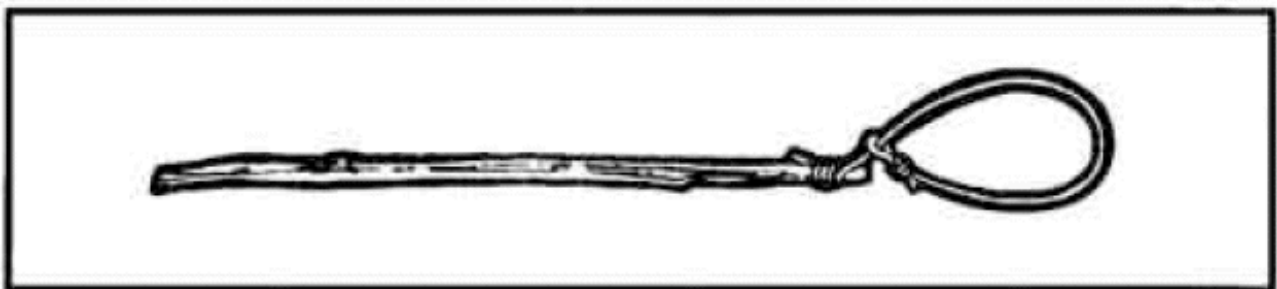
knot and allowing the weight to drop. The noose will tighten around the bird's feet, capturing it. If the weight is too heavy, it will cut the bird's feet off, allowing it to escape.



*Figure 1-9 Ojibwa bird pole*

### Noosing Wand

A noose stick or "noosing wand" is useful for capturing roosting birds or small mammals (**Figure 1-10**). It requires a patient operator. This wand is more a weapon than a trap. It consists of a pole (as long as you can effectively handle) with a slip noose of wire or stiff cordage at the small end. To catch an animal, you slip the noose over the neck of a roosting bird and pull it tight. You can also place it over a den hole and hide in a nearby blind. When the animal emerges from the den, you jerk the pole to tighten the noose and thus capture the animal. Carry a stout club to kill the prey.



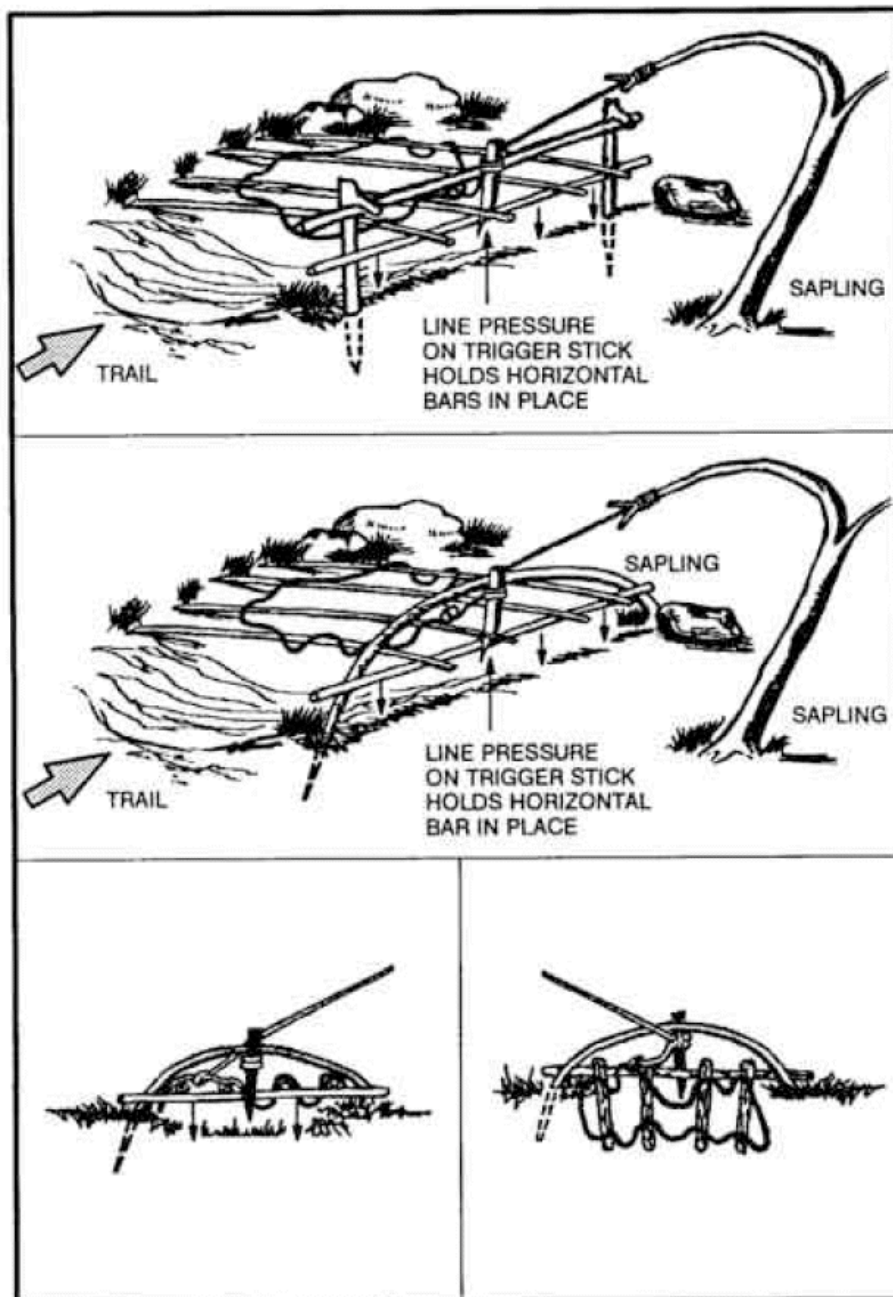
*Figure 1-10 Noosing wand*

### Treadle Spring Snare

Use a treadle snare against small game on a trail (**Figure 1-11**). Dig a shallow hole in the trail. Then drive a forked stick (fork down) into the ground on each side of the hole on the same side of the trail. Select two fairly straight sticks that span the two forks. Position these two sticks so that their ends engage the forks. Place several sticks over the hole in the trail by positioning one end over the lower horizontal stick and the other on the

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ground on the other side of the hole. Cover the hole with enough sticks so that the prey must step on at least one of them to set off the snare. Tie one end of a piece of cordage to a twitch-up or to a weight suspended over a tree limb. Bend the twitch-up or raise the suspended weight to determine where you will tie a 5 centimetre or so long trigger. Form a noose with the other end of the cordage. Route and spread the noose over the top of the sticks over the hole. Place the trigger stick against the horizontal sticks and route the cordage behind the sticks so that the tension of the power source will hold it in place. Adjust the bottom horizontal stick so that it will barely hold against the trigger. As the animal places its foot on a stick across the hole, the bottom horizontal stick moves down, releasing the trigger and allowing the noose to catch the animal by the foot. Because of the disturbance on the trail, an animal will be wary. You must therefore use channellisation.

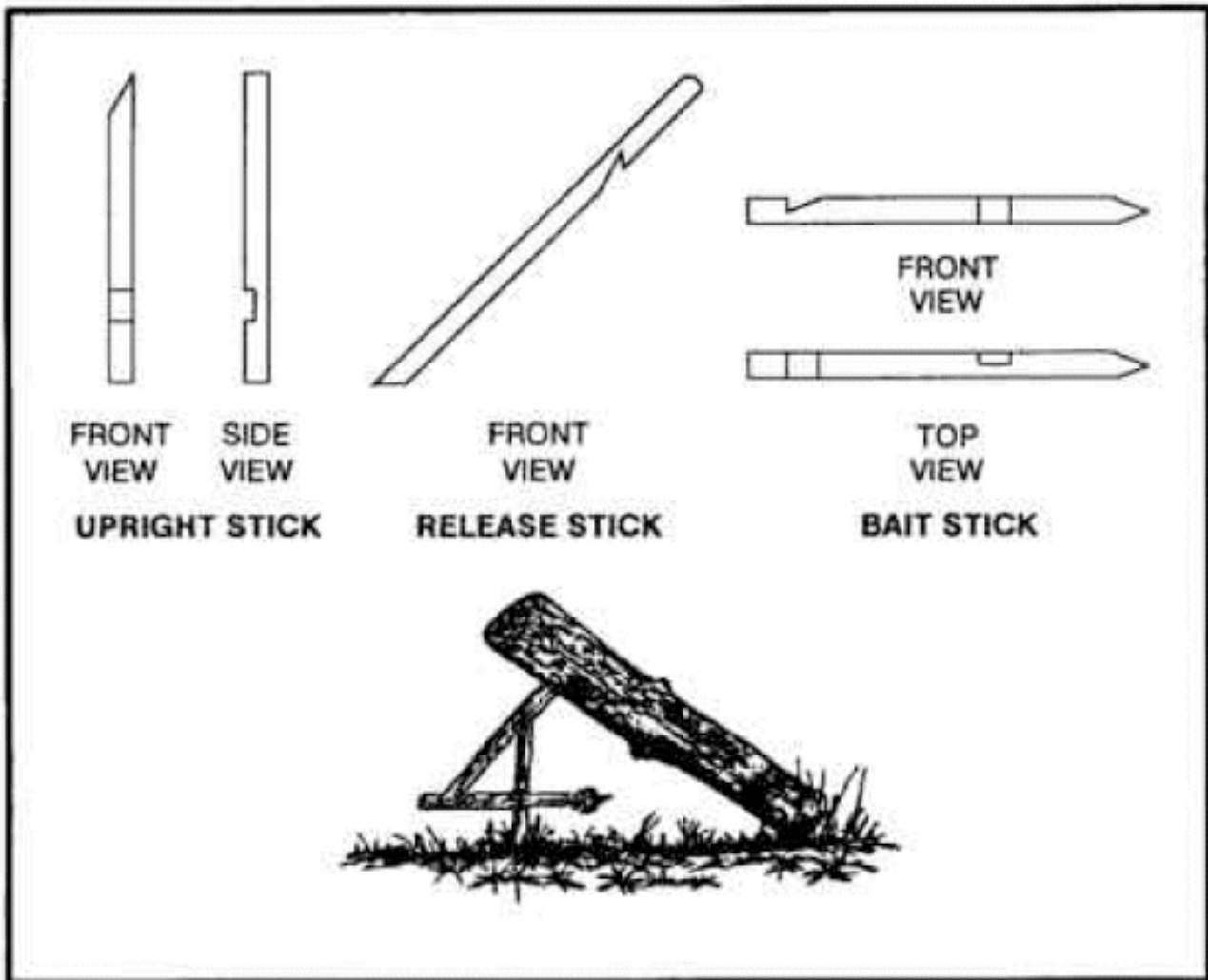


*Figure 1-11 Treadle spring snare*

**Figure 4 Deadfall**

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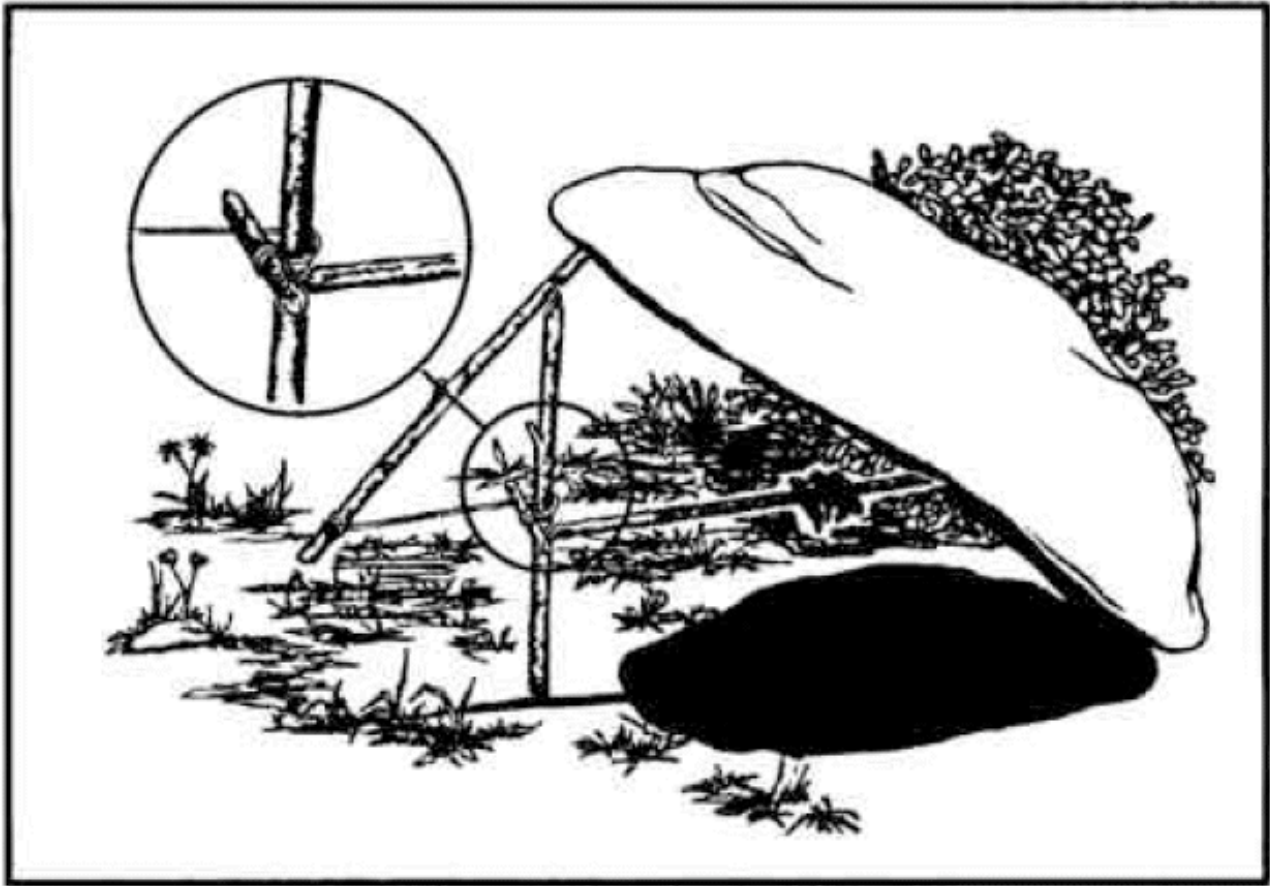
The figure 4 is a trigger used to drop a weight onto a prey and crush it (**Figure 1-12**). The type of weight used may vary, but it should be heavy enough to kill or incapacitate the prey immediately. Construct the figure 4 using three notched sticks. These notches hold the sticks together in a figure 4 pattern when under tension. Practice making this trigger before-hand; it requires close tolerances and precise angles in its construction.



**Figure 1-12 Figure 4 deadfall**

### **Paiute Deadfall**

The Paiute deadfall is similar to the figure 4 but uses a piece of cordage and a catch stick (**Figure 1-13**). It has the advantage of being easier to set than the figure 4. Tie one end of a piece of cordage to the lower end of the diagonal stick. Tie the other end of the cordage to another stick about 5 centimeters long. This 5-centimeter stick is the catch stick. Bring the cord halfway around the vertical stick with the catch stick at a 90-degree angle. Place the bait stick with one end against the drop weight, or a peg driven into the ground, and the other against the catch stick. When a prey disturbs the bait stick, it falls free, releasing the catch stick. As the diagonal stick flies up, the weight falls, crushing the prey.



*Figure 1-13 Paiute deadfall*

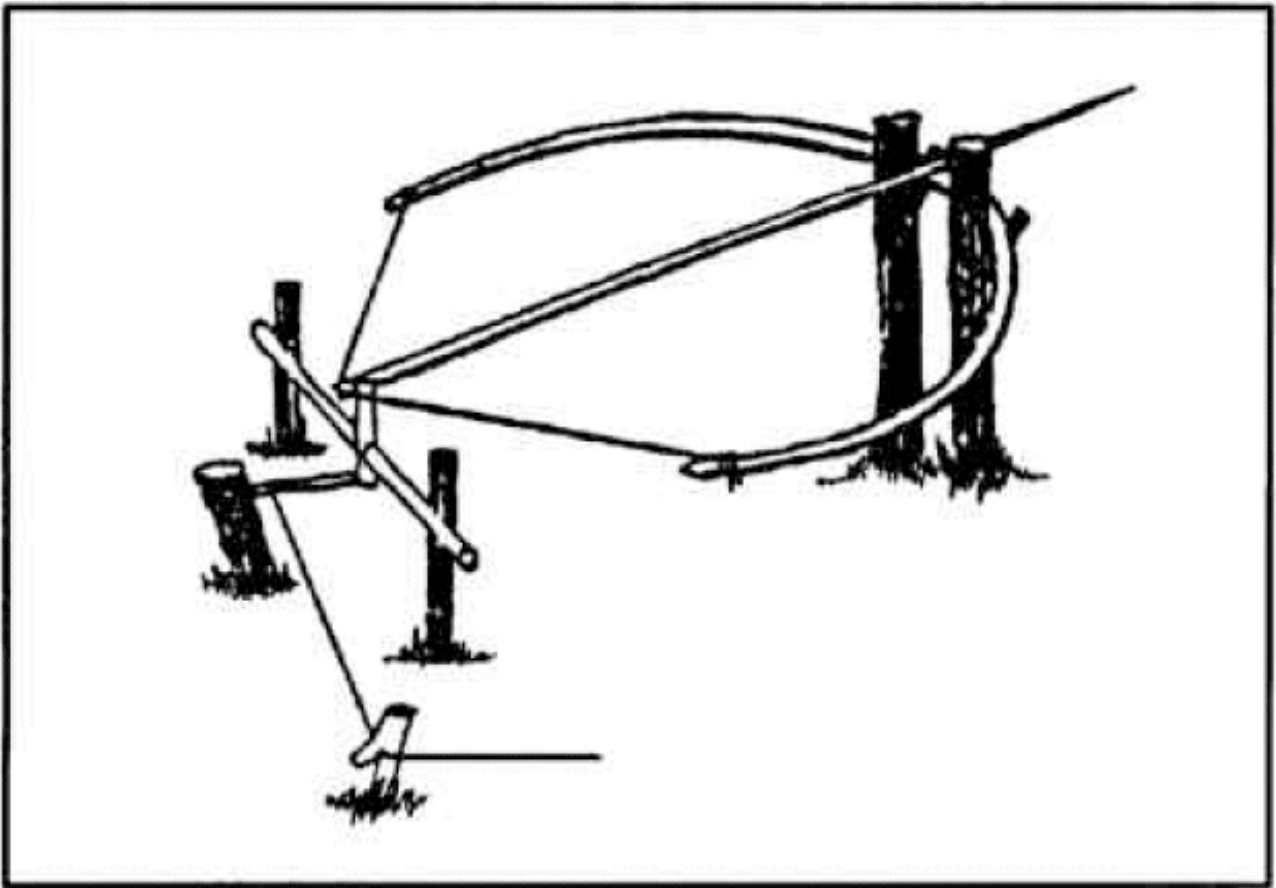
### **Bow Trap**

A bow trap is one of the deadliest traps. It is dangerous to man as well as animals (**Figure 1-14**). To construct this trap, build a bow and anchor it to the ground with pegs. Adjust the aiming point as you anchor the bow. Lash a toggle stick to the trigger stick. Two upright sticks driven into the ground hold the trigger stick in place at a point where the toggle stick will engage the pulled bow string. Place a catch stick between the toggle stick and a stake driven into the ground. Tie a trip wire or cordage to the catch stick and route it around stakes and across the game trail where you tie it off (as in **Figure 1-14**). When the prey trips the trip wire, the bow looses an arrow into it. A notch in the bow serves to help aim the arrow.

### **WARNING**

**This is a lethal trap. Approach it with caution and from the rear only!**





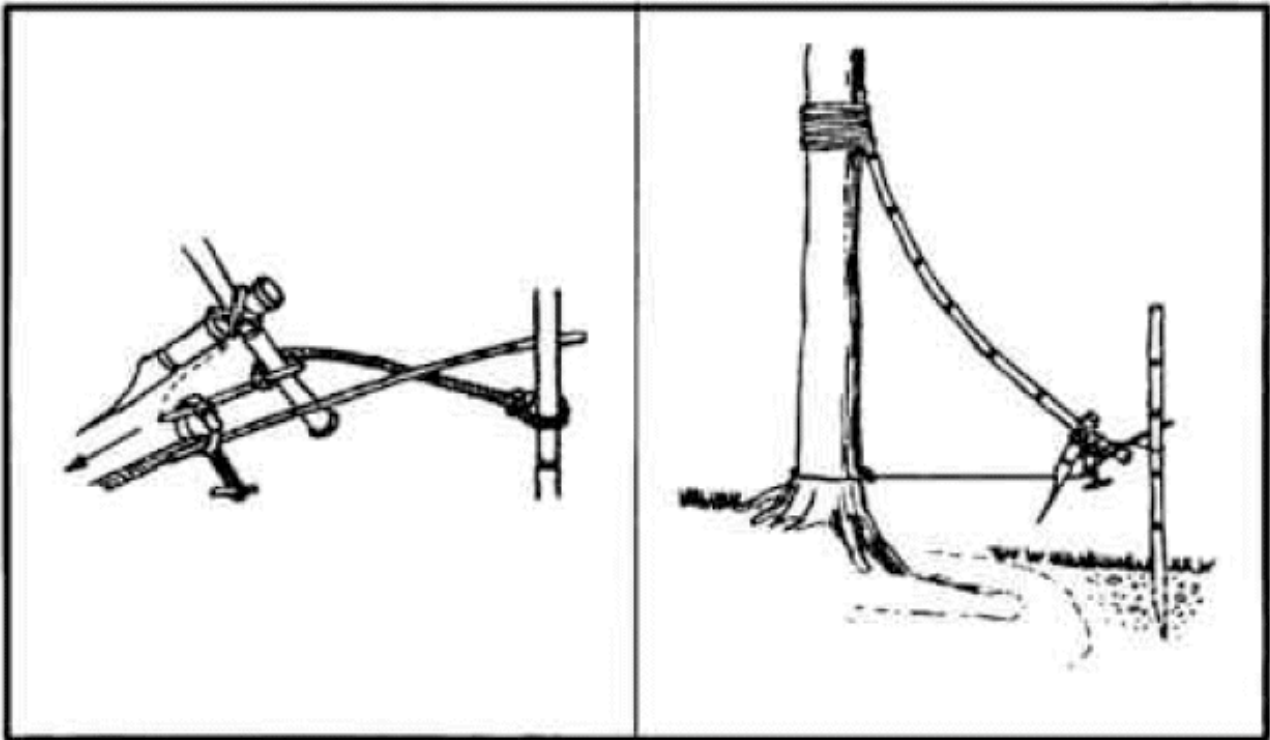
*Figure 1-14 Bow trap*

### **Pig Spear Shaft**

To construct the pig spear shaft, select a stout pole about 2.5 meters long (**Figure 1-15**). At the smaller end, firmly lash several small stakes. Lash the large end tightly to a tree along the game trail. Tie a length of cordage to another tree across the trail. Tie a sturdy, smooth stick to the other end of the cord. From the first tree, tie a trip wire or cord low to the ground, stretch it across the trail, and tie it to a catch stick. Make a slip ring from vines or other suitable material. Encircle the trip wire and the smooth stick with the slip ring. Emplace one end of another smooth stick within the slip ring and its other end against the second tree. Pull the smaller end of the spear shaft across the trail and position it between the short cord and the smooth stick. As the animal trips the trip wire, the catch stick pulls the slip ring off the smooth sticks, releasing the spear shaft that springs across the trail and impales the prey against the tree.

### **WARNING**

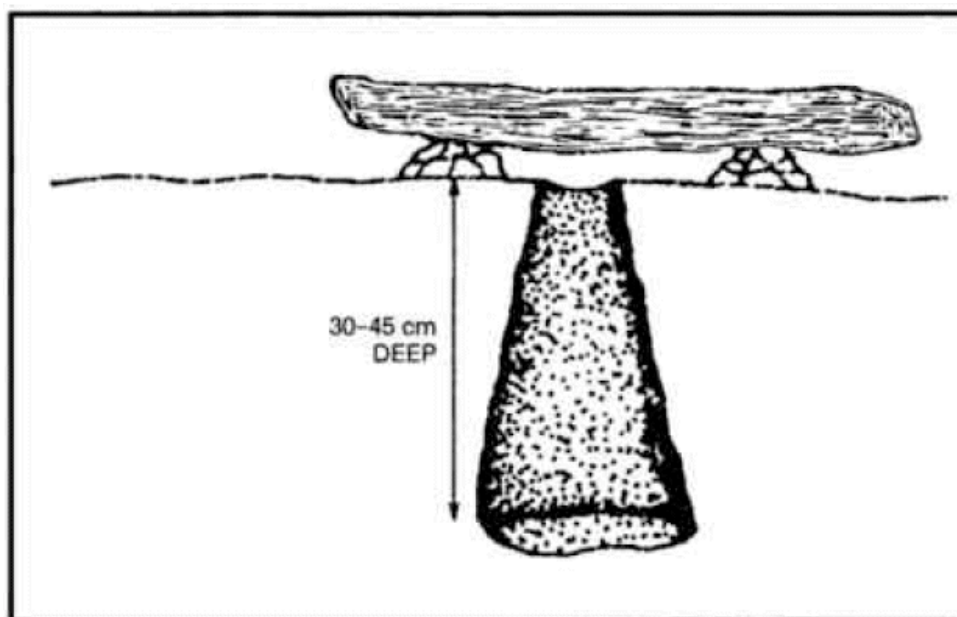
**This is a lethal trap. Approach it with caution!**



*Figure 1-15 Pig spear shaft*

### Bottle Trap

A bottle trap is a simple trap for mice and voles (**Figure 1-16**). Dig a hole 30 to 45 centimetres deep that is wider at the bottom than at the top. Make the top of the hole as small as possible. Place a piece of bark or wood over the hole with small stones under it to hold it up 2.5 to 5 centimetres off the ground. Mice or voles will hide under the cover to escape danger and fall into the hole. They cannot climb out because of the wall's backward slope. Use caution when checking this trap; it is an excellent hiding place for snakes.



*Figure 1-16 Bottle trap*

## KILLING DEVICES

## **U.S MARINE CORP. WILD FOOD SURVIVAL**

There are several killing devices that you can construct to help you obtain small game to help you survive. The rabbit stick, the spear, the bow and arrow, and the sling are such devices.

### **Rabbit Stick**

One of the simplest and most effective killing devices is a stout stick as long as your arm, from fingertip to shoulder, called a "rabbit stick." You can throw it either overhand or sidearm and with considerable force. It is very effective against small game that stops and freezes as a defence.

### **Spear**

You can make a spear to kill small game and to fish. Jab with the spear, do not throw it. See spear fishing below.

### **Bow and Arrow**

A good bow is the result of many hours of work. You can construct a suitable short-term bow fairly easily. When it loses its spring or breaks, you can replace it. Select a hardwood stick about one meter long that is free of knots or limbs. Carefully scrape the large end down until it has the same pull as the small end. Careful examination will show the natural curve of the stick. Always scrape from the side that faces you, or the bow will break the first time you pull it. Dead, dry wood is preferable to green wood. To increase the pull, lash a second bow to the first, front to front, forming an "X" when viewed from the side. Attach the tips of the bows with cordage and only use a bowstring on one bow. Select arrows from the straightest dry sticks available. The arrows should be about half as long as the bow. Scrape each shaft smooth all around. You will probably have to straighten the shaft. You can bend an arrow straight by heating the shaft over hot coals. Do not allow the shaft to scorch or bum. Hold the shaft straight until it cools.

You can make arrowheads from bone, glass, metal, or pieces of rock. You can also sharpen and fire harden the end of the shaft. To fire harden wood, hold it over hot coals, being careful not to bum or scorch the wood.

You must notch the ends of the arrows for the bowstring. Cut or file the notch; do not split it. Fletching (adding feathers to the notched end of an arrow) improves the arrow's flight characteristics, but is not necessary on a field-expedient arrow.

### **Sling**

You can make a sling by tying two pieces of cordage, about sixty centimetres long, at opposite ends of a palm-sized piece of leather or cloth. Place a rock in the cloth and wrap one cord around the middle finger and hold in your palm. Hold the other cord between the forefinger and thumb. To throw the rock, spin the sling several times in a circle and release the cord between the thumb and forefinger. Practice to gain proficiency. The sling is very effective against small game.

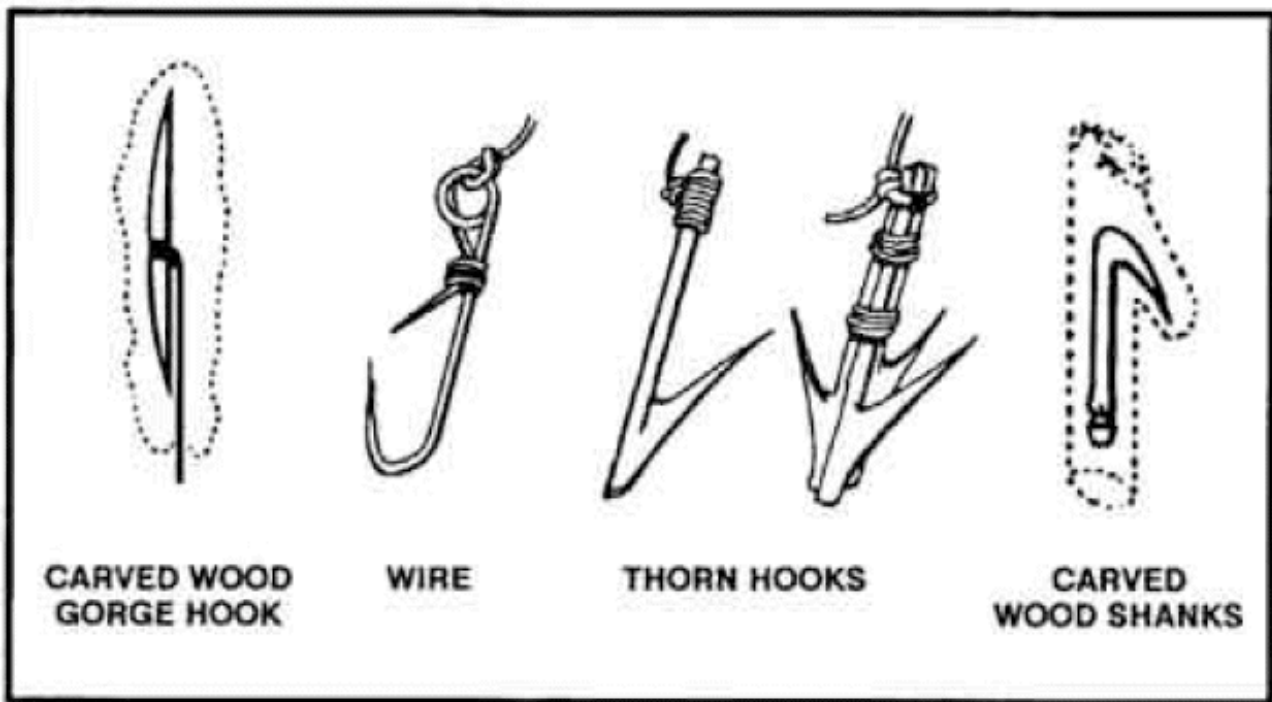
## **FISHING DEVICES**

## U.S MARINE CORP. WILD FOOD SURVIVAL

You can make your own fishhooks, nets and traps and use several methods to obtain fish in a survival situation.

### Improvised Fishhooks

You can make field-expedient fishhooks from pins, needles, wire, small nails, or any piece of metal. You can also use wood, bone, coconut shell, thorns, flint, seashell, or tortoise shell. You can also make fishhooks from any combination of these items (**Figure 1-17**).



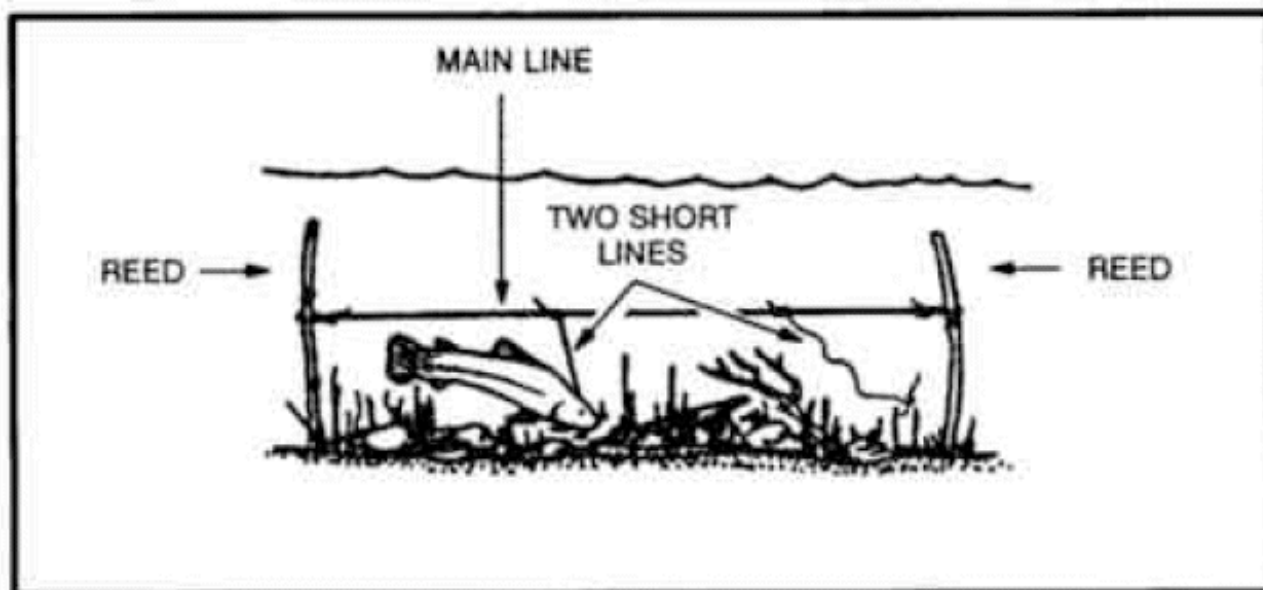
**Figure 1-17 Improvised fish hooks**

To make a wooden hook, cut a piece of hardwood about 2.5 centimetres long and about 6 millimetres in diameter to form the shank. Cut a notch in one end in which to place the point. Place the point (piece of bone, wire, nail) in the notch. Hold the point in the notch and tie securely so that it does not move out of position. This is a fairly large hook. To make smaller hooks, use smaller material.

A gorge is a small shaft of wood, bone, metal, or other material. It is sharp on both ends and notched in the middle where you tie cordage. Bait the gorge by placing a piece of bait on it length wise. When the fish swallows the bait, it also swallows the gorge.

### Stakeout

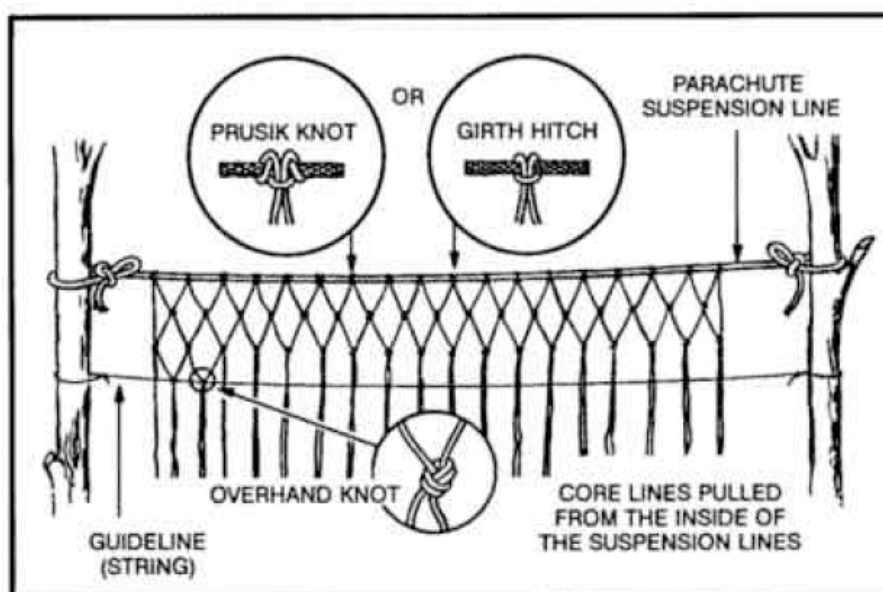
A stakeout is a fishing device you can use in a hostile environment (**Figure 1-18**). To construct a stakeout, drive two supple saplings into the bottom of the lake, pond, or stream with their tops just below the water surface. Tie a cord between them and slightly below the surface. Tie two short cords with hooks or gorges to this cord, ensuring that they cannot wrap around the poles or each other. They should also not slip along the long cord. Bait the hooks or gorges.



**Figure 1-18 Stakeout**

## Gill Net

If a gill net is not available, you can make one using parachute suspension line or similar material (**Figure 1-19**). Remove the core lines from the suspension line and tie the easing between two trees. Attach several core lines to the easing by doubling them over and tying them with prussic knots or girth hitches. The length of the desired net and the size of the mesh determine the number of core lines used and the space between them. Starting at one end of the easing, tie the second and the third core lines together using an overhand knot. Then tie the fourth and fifth, sixth and seventh, and so on, until you reach the last core line. You should now have all core lines tied in pairs with a single core line hanging at each end. Start the second row with the first core line, tie it to the second, the third to the fourth, and so on.



**Figure 1-19 Making a gill net**

To keep the rows even and to regulate the size of the mesh, tie a guideline to the trees. Position the guideline on the opposite side of the net you are working on. Move the guideline down after completing each row. The lines will always hang in pairs and you



## U.S MARINE CORP. WILD FOOD SURVIVAL

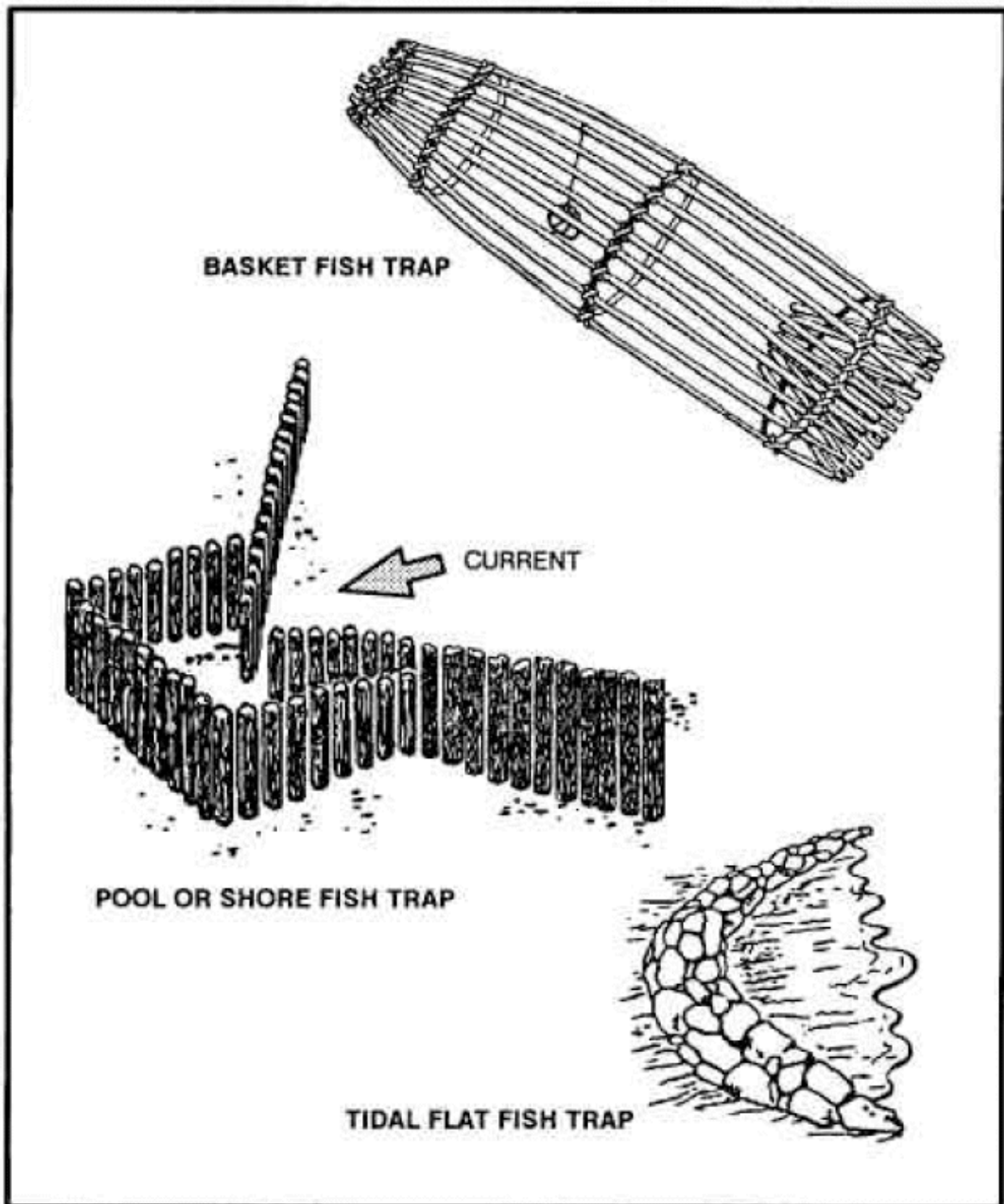
always tie a cord from one pair to a cord from an adjoining pair. Continue tying rows until the net is the desired width. Thread a suspension line easing along the bottom of the net to strengthen it. Use the gill net as shown in **Figure 1-20**.



*Figure 1-20 Setting a gill net in a stream*

### Fish Traps

You may trap fish using several methods (**Figure 1-21**). Fish baskets are one method. You construct them by lashing several sticks together with vines into a funnel shape. You close the top, leaving a hole large enough for the fish to swim through.



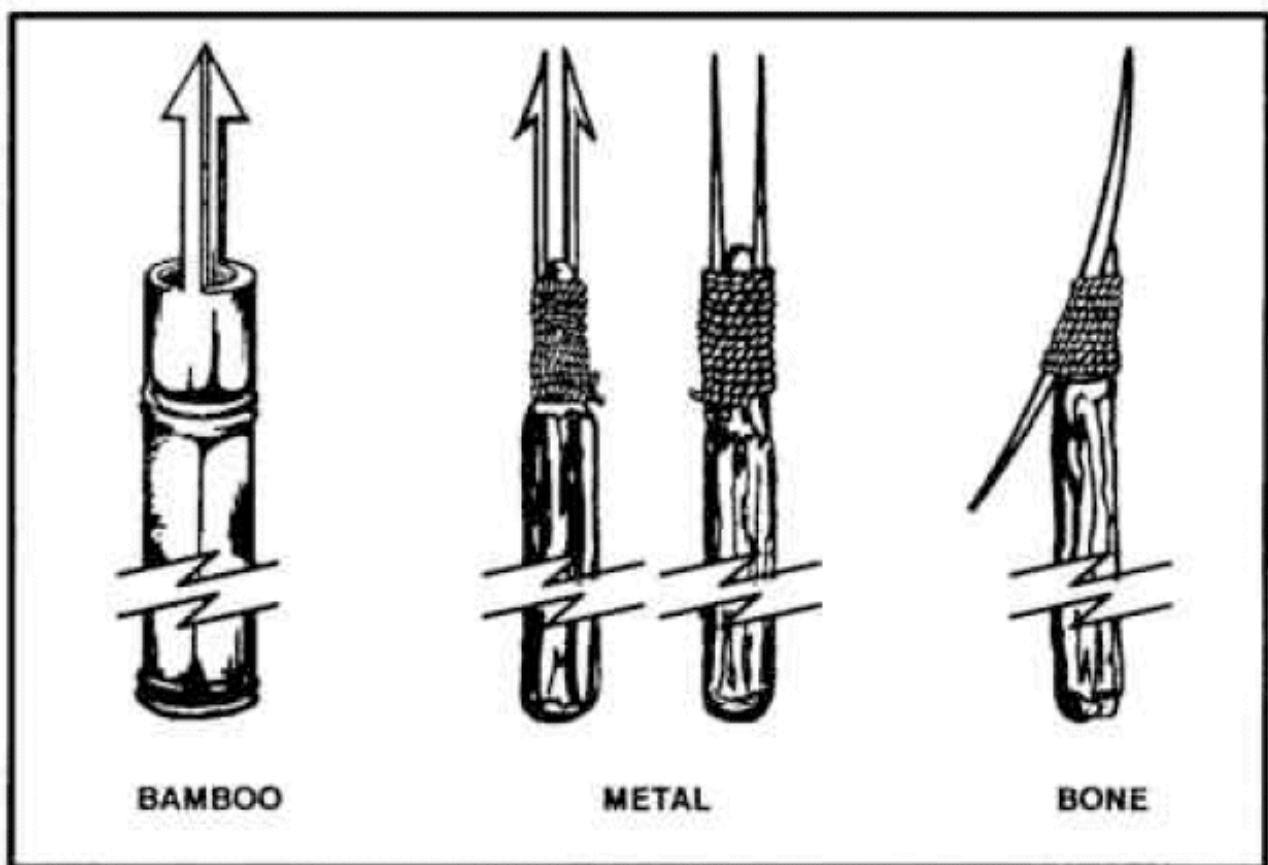
**Figure 1-21 Various types of fish traps**

You can also use traps to catch saltwater fish, as schools regularly approach the shore with the incoming tide and often move parallel to the shore. Pick a location at high tide and build the trap at low tide. On rocky shores, use natural rock pools. On coral islands, use natural pools on the surface of reefs by blocking the openings as the tide recedes. On sandy shores, use sandbars and the ditches they enclose. Build the trap as a low stone wall extending outward into the water and forming an angle with the shore.

### **Spear Fishing**

## U.S MARINE CORP. WILD FOOD SURVIVAL

If you are near shallow water (about waist deep) where the fish are large and plentiful, you can spear them. To make a spear, cut a long, straight sapling (**Figure 1-22**). Sharpen the end to a point or attach a knife, jagged piece of bone, or sharpened metal. You can also make a spear by splitting the shaft a few inches down from the end and inserting a piece of wood to act as a spreader. You then sharpen the two separated halves to points. To spear fish, find an area where fish either gather or where there is a fish run. Place the spear point into the water and slowly move it toward the fish. Then, with a sudden push, impale the fish on the stream bottom. Do not try to lift the fish with the spear, as it will probably slip off and you will lose it; hold the spear with one hand and grab and hold the fish with the other. Do not throw the spear, especially if the point is a knife. You cannot afford to lose a knife in a survival situation. Be alert to the problems caused by light refraction when looking at objects in the water.



*Figure 1-22 Types of spear points*

### Chop Fishing

At night, in an area with a good fish density, you can use a light to attract fish. Then, armed with a machete or similar weapon, you can gather fish using the back side of the blade to strike them. Do not use the sharp side as you will cut them in two pieces and end up losing some of the fish.

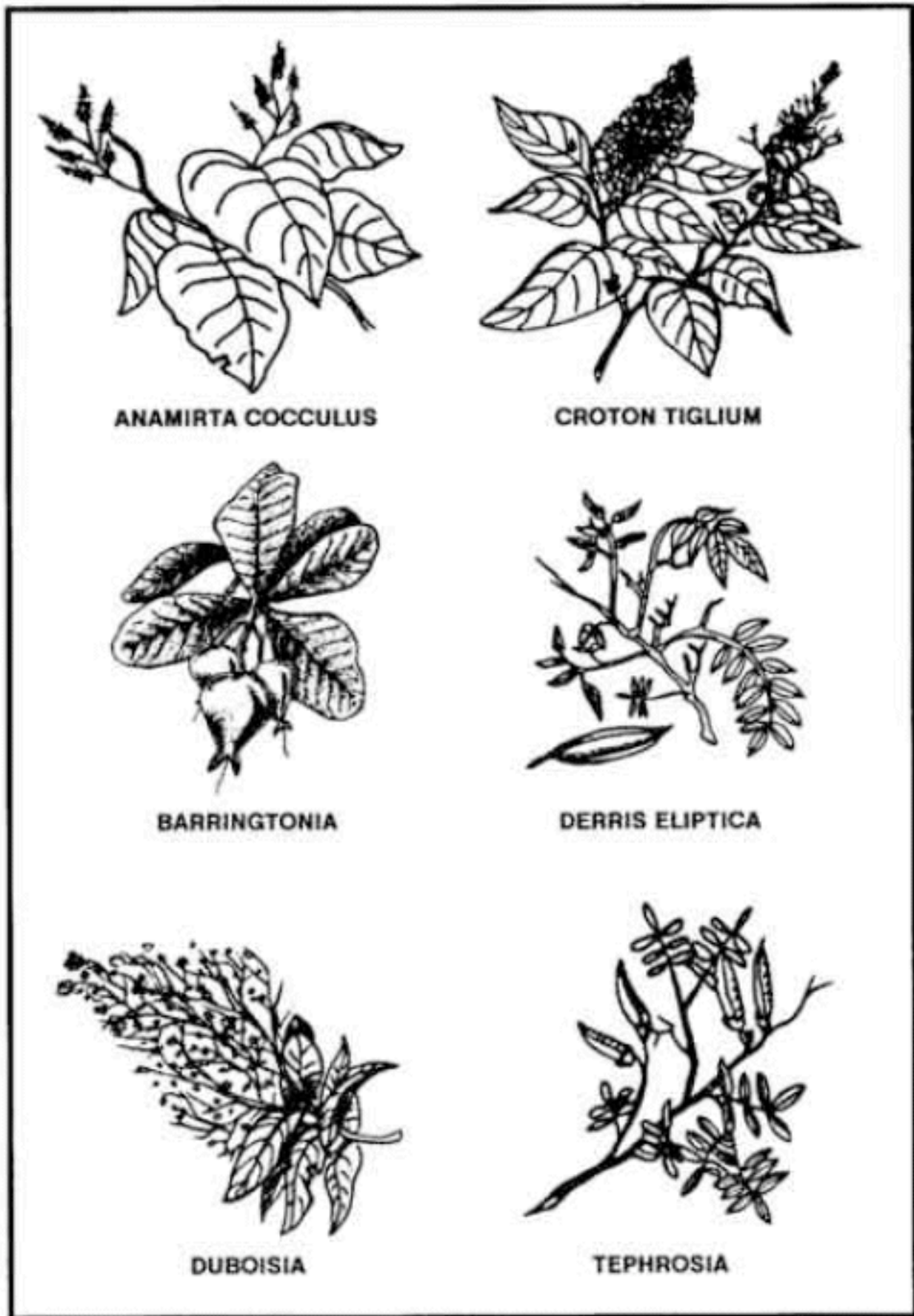
### Fish Poison

## U.S MARINE CORP. WILD FOOD SURVIVAL

Another way to catch fish is by using poison. Poison works quickly. It allows you to remain concealed while it takes effect. It also enables you to catch several fish at one time. When using fish poison, be sure to gather all of the affected fish, because many dead fish floating downstream could arouse suspicion. Some plants that grow in warm regions of the world contain rotenone, a substance that stuns or kills cold-blooded animals but does not harm persons who eat the animals. The best place to use rotenone, or rotenone-producing plants, is in ponds or the headwaters of small streams containing fish. Rotenone works quickly on fish in water 21 degrees C (70 degrees F) or above. The fish rise helplessly to the surface. It works slowly in water 10 to 21 degrees C (50 to 70 degrees F) and is ineffective in water below 10 degrees C (50 degrees F). The following plants, used as indicated, will stun or kill fish:

- *Anamirta cocculus* (Figure 1-23). This woody vine grows in southern Asia and on islands of the South Pacific. Crush the bean-shaped seeds and throw them in the water.
- *Croton tiglium* (Figure 1-23). This shrub or small tree grows in waste areas on islands of the South Pacific. It bears seeds in three angled capsules. Crush the seeds and throw them into the water.
- *Barringtonia* (Figure 1-23). These large trees grow near the sea in Malaya and parts of Polynesia. They bear a fleshy one-seeded fruit. Crush the seeds and bark and throw into the water.
- *Derris eliptica* (Figure 1-23). This large genus of tropical shrubs and woody vines is the main source of commercially produced rotenone. Grind the roots into a powder and mix with water. Throw a large quantity of the mixture into the water.
- *Duboisia* (Figure 1-23). This shrub grows in Australia and bears white clusters of flowers and berrylike fruit. Crush the plants and throw them into the water.
- *Tephrosia* (Figure 1-23). This species of small shrubs, which bears beanlike pods, grows throughout the tropics. Crush or bruise bundles of leaves and stems and throw them into the water.
- *Lime*. You can get lime from commercial sources and in agricultural areas that use large quantities of it. You may produce your own by burning coral or seashells. Throw the lime into the water.
- *Nut husks*. Crush green husks from butternuts or black walnuts. Throw the husks into the water.





*Figure 1-23 Fish poisoning plants*



## PREPARATION OF FISH AND GAME FOR COOKING AND STORAGE

You must know how to prepare fish and game for cooking and storage in a survival situation. Improper cleaning or storage can result in inedible fish or game.

### Fish

Do not eat fish that appears spoiled. Cooking does not ensure that spoiled fish will be edible. Signs of spoilage are--

- Sunken eyes.
- Peculiar odour.
- Suspicious colour. (Gills should be red to pink. Scales should be a pronounced shade of grey, not faded.)
- Dents stay in the fish's flesh after pressing it with your thumb.
- Slimy, rather than moist or wet body.
- Sharp or peppery taste.

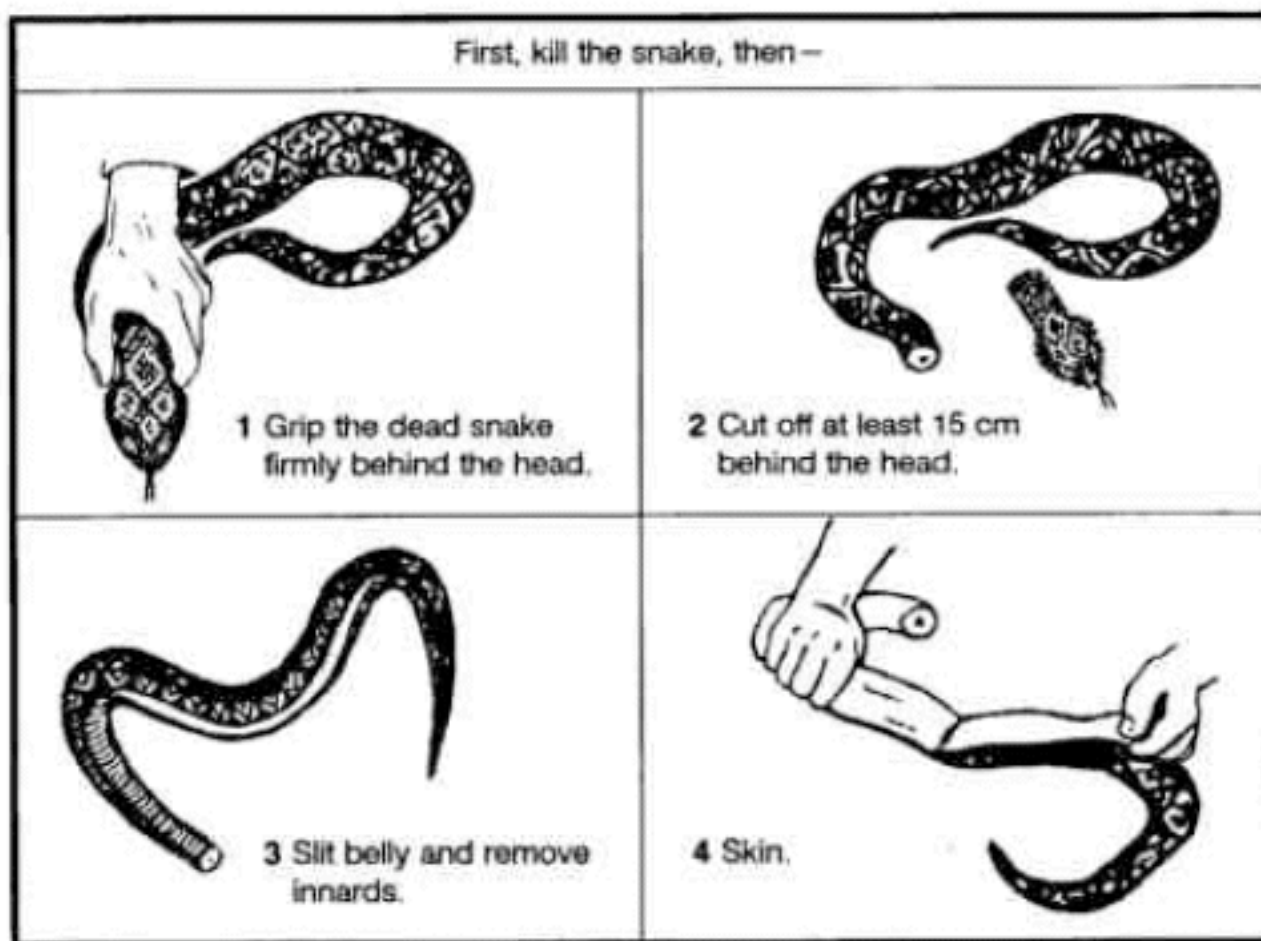
Eating spoiled or rotten fish may cause diarrhoea, nausea, cramps, vomiting, itching, paralysis, or a metallic taste in the mouth. These symptoms appear suddenly, one to six hours after eating. Induce vomiting if symptoms appear.

Fish spoils quickly after death, especially on a hot day. Prepare fish for eating as soon as possible after catching it. Cut out the gills and large blood vessels that lie near the spine. Gut fish that is more than 10 centimetres long. Scale or skin the fish.

You can impale a whole fish on a stick and cook it over an open fire. However, boiling the fish with the skin on is the best way to get the most food value. The fats and oil are under the skin and, by boiling, you can save the juices for broth. You can use any of the methods used to cook plant food to cook fish. Pack fish into a ball of clay and bury it in the coals of a fire until the clay hardens. Break open the clay ball to get to the cooked fish. Fish is done when the meat flakes off. If you plan to keep the fish for later, smoke or fry it. To prepare fish for smoking, cut off the head and remove the backbone.

### Snakes

To skin a snake, first cut off its head and bury it. Then cut the skin down the body 15 to 20 centimetres (**Figure 1-24**). Peel the skin back, then grasp the skin in one hand and the body in the other and pull apart. On large, bulky snakes it may be necessary to slit the belly skin. Cook snakes in the same manner as small game. Remove the entrails and discard. Cut the snake into small sections and boil or roast it.



**Figure 1-24 Cleaning a snake**

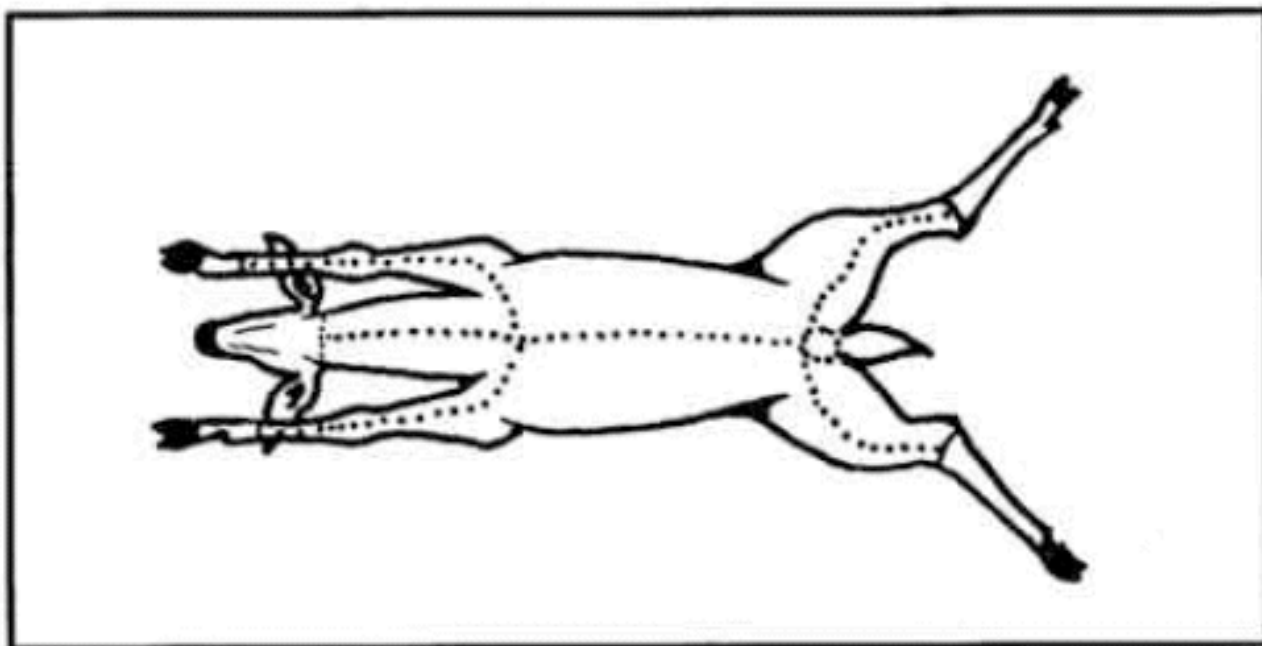
## Birds

After killing the bird, remove its feathers by either plucking or skinning. Remember, skinning removes some of the food value. Open up the body cavity and remove its entrails, saving the craw (in seed-eating birds), heart, and liver. Cut off the feet. Cook by boiling or roasting over a spit. Before cooking scavenger birds, boil them at least 20 minutes to kill parasites.

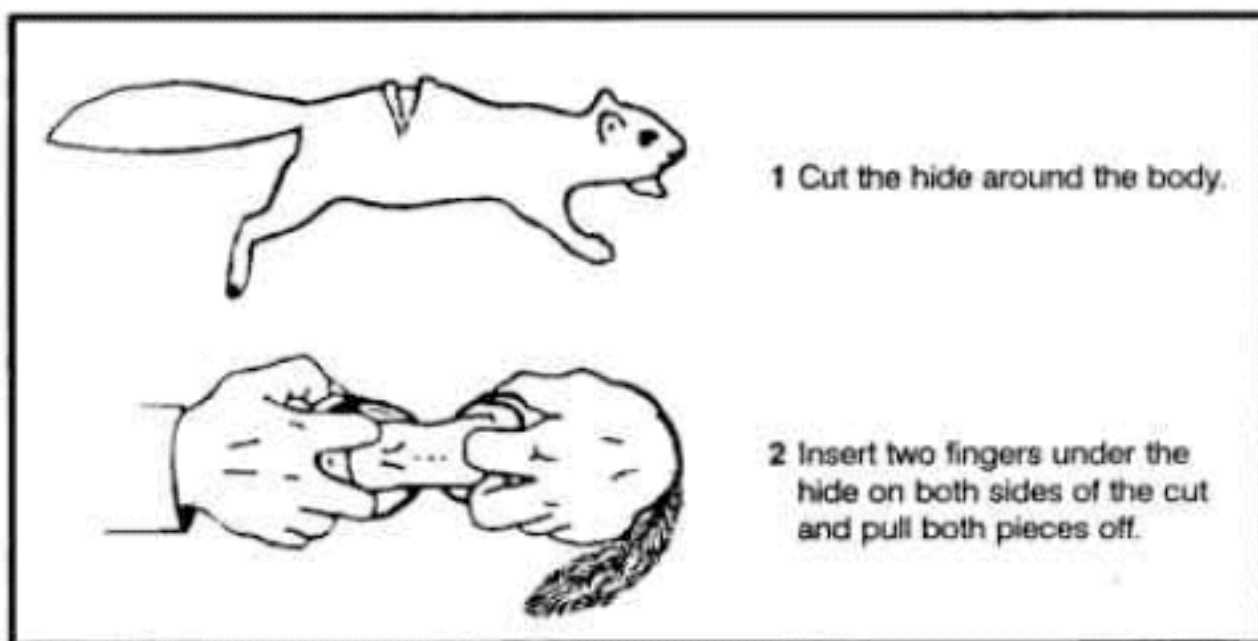
## Skinning and Butchering Game

Bleed the animal by cutting its throat. If possible, clean the carcass near a stream. Place the carcass belly up and split the hide from throat to tail, cutting around all sexual organs (**Figure 1-25**). Remove the musk glands at points A and B to avoid tainting the meat. For smaller mammals, cut the hide around the body and insert two fingers under the hide on both sides of the cut and pull both pieces off (**Figure 1-26**).

*Note: When cutting the hide, insert the knife blade under the skin and turn the blade up so that only the hide gets cut. This will also prevent cutting hair and getting it on the meat.*



**Figure 1-25 Skinning and butchering large game**



**Figure 1-26 Skinning small game**

Remove the entrails from smaller game by splitting the body open and pulling them out with the fingers. Do not forget the chest cavity. For larger game, cut the gullet away from the diaphragm. Roll the entrails out of the body. Cut around the anus, then reach into the lower abdominal cavity, grasp the lower intestine, and pull to remove. Remove the urine bladder by pinching it off and cutting it below the fingers. If you spill urine on the meat, wash it to avoid tainting the meat. Save the heart and liver. Cut these open and inspect for signs of worms or other parasites. Also inspect the liver's colour; it could indicate a diseased animal. The liver's surface should be smooth and wet and its colour deep red or purple. If the liver appears diseased, discard it. However, a diseased liver does not indicate you cannot eat the muscle tissue.

## U.S MARINE CORP. WILD FOOD SURVIVAL

Cut along each leg from above the foot to the previously made body cut. Remove the hide by pulling it away from the carcass, cutting the connective tissue where necessary. Cut off the head and feet.

Cut larger game into manageable pieces. First, slice the muscle tissue connecting the front legs to the body. There are no bones or joints connecting the front legs to the body on four-legged animals. Cut the hindquarters off where they join the body. You must cut around a large bone at the top of the leg and cut to the ball and socket hip joint. Cut the ligaments around the joint and bend it back to separate it. Remove the large muscles (the tenderloin) that lie on either side of the spine. Separate the ribs from the backbone. There is less work and less wear on your knife if you break the ribs first, then cut through the breaks.

Cook large meat pieces over a spit or boil them. You can stew or boil smaller pieces, particularly those that remain attached to bone after the initial butchering, as soup or broth. You can cook body organs such as the heart, liver, pancreas, spleen, and kidneys using the same methods as for muscle meat. You can also cook and eat the brain. Cut the tongue out, skin it, boil it until tender, and eat it.

### Smoking Meat

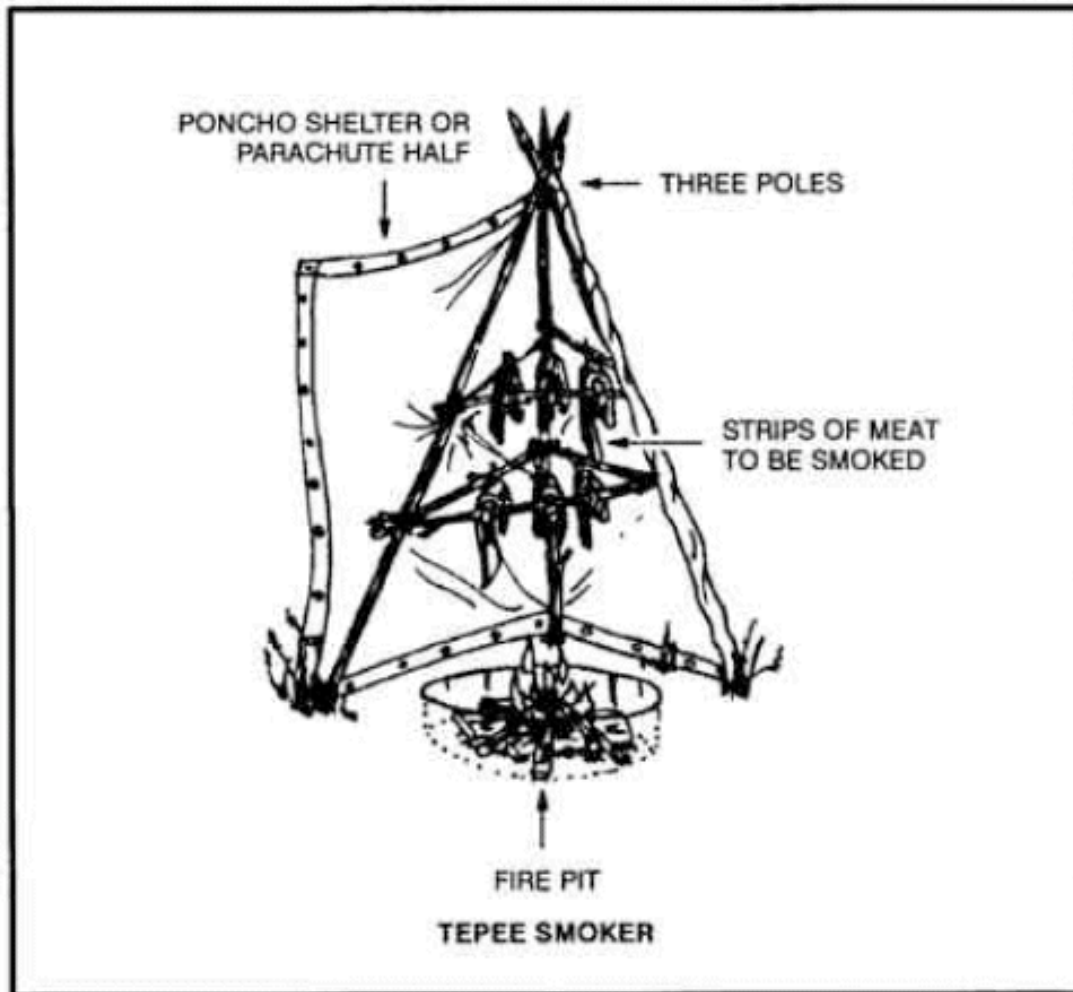
To smoke meat, prepare an enclosure around a fire (**Figure 1-27**). Two ponchos snapped together will work. The fire does not need to be big or hot.

The intent is to produce smoke, not heat. Do not use resinous wood in the fire because its smoke will ruin the meat. Use hardwoods to produce good smoke. The wood should be somewhat green. If it is too dry, soak it.

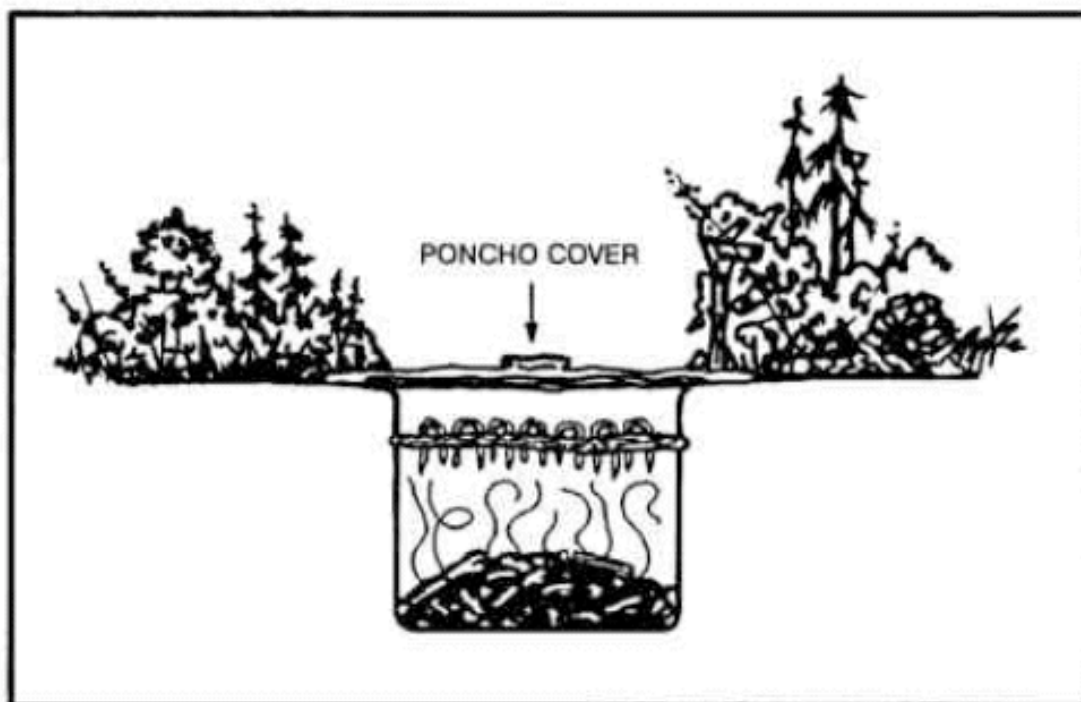
Cut the meat into thin slices, no more than 6 centimetres thick, and drape them over a framework. Make sure none of the meat touches another piece.

Keep the poncho enclosure around the meat to hold the smoke and keep a close watch on the fire. Do not let the fire get too hot.

Meat smoked overnight in this manner will last about 1 week. Two days of continuous smoking will preserve the meat for 2 to 4 weeks. Properly smoked meat will look like a dark, curled, brittle stick and you can eat it without further cooking. You can also use a pit to smoke meat (**Figure 1-28**).



*Figure 1-27 Smoking meat*



*Figure 1-28 Smoking meat over a pit*



## U.S MARINE CORP. WILD FOOD SURVIVAL

To preserve meat by drying, cut it into 6-millimetre strips with the grain. Hang the meat strips on a rack in a sunny location with good air flow. Keep the strips out of the reach of animals and cover them to keep blowflies off. Allow the meat to dry thoroughly before eating. Properly dried meat will have a dry, crisp texture and will not feel cool to the touch.

### Other Preservation Methods

You can also preserve meats using the freezing or brine and salt methods.

#### Freezing

In cold climates, you can freeze and keep meat indefinitely. Freezing is not a means of preparing meat. You must still cook it before eating.

#### Brine and Salt

You can preserve meat by soaking it thoroughly in a saltwater solution. The solution must cover the meat. You can also use salt by itself. Wash off the salt before cooking.

## SURVIVAL USE OF PLANTS

*After having solved the problems of finding water, shelter, and animal food, you will have to consider the use of plants you can eat. In a survival situation you should always be on the lookout for familiar wild foods and live off the land whenever possible.*

*You must not count on being able to go for days without food as some sources would suggest. Even in the most static survival situation, maintaining health through a complete and nutritious diet is essential to maintaining strength and peace of mind.*

*Nature can provide you with food that will let you survive any ordeal, if you don't eat the wrong plant. You must therefore learn as much as possible beforehand about the flora of the region where you will be operating. Plants can provide you with medicines in a survival situation.*

*Plants can supply you with weapons and raw materials to construct shelters and build fires. Plants can even provide you with chemicals for poisoning fish, preserving animal hides, and for camouflaging yourself and your equipment.*

### Edibility of Plants

Plants are valuable sources of food because they are widely available, easily procured, and, in the proper combinations, can meet all your nutritional needs.

#### WARNING

**The critical factors in using plants for food is to avoid accidental poisoning. Eat only those plants you can positively identify and you know are safe to eat.**

Absolutely identify plants before using them as food. Poison hemlock has killed people who mistook it for its relatives, wild carrots and wild parsnips.

## U.S MARINE CORP. WILD FOOD SURVIVAL

At times you may find yourself in a situation for which you could not plan. In this instance you may not have had the chance to learn the plant life of the region in which you must survive. In this case you can use the Universal Edibility Test (see below) to determine which plants you can eat and those to avoid.

It is important to be able to recognise both cultivated and wild edible plants in a survival situation. Most of the information in this chapter is directed towards identifying wild plants because information relating to cultivated plants is more readily available. Remember the following when collecting wild plants for food:

- Plants growing near homes and occupied buildings or along roadsides may have been sprayed with pesticides. Wash them thoroughly. In more highly developed countries with many automobiles, avoid roadside plants, if possible, due to contamination from exhaust emissions.
- Plants growing in contaminated water or in water containing *Giardia lamblia* and other parasites are contaminated themselves. Boil or disinfect them.
- Some plants develop extremely dangerous fungal toxins. To lessen the chance of accidental poisoning, do not eat any fruit that is starting to spoil or showing signs of mildew or fungus.
- Plants of the same species may differ in their toxic or sub-toxic compounds content because of genetic or environmental factors. One example of this is the foliage of the common chokecherry. Some chokecherry plants have high concentrations of deadly cyanide compounds while others have low concentrations or none. Horses have died from eating wilted wild cherry leaves. Avoid any weed, leaves, or seeds with an almond like scent, a characteristic of the cyanide compounds.
- Some people are more susceptible to gastric distress (from plants) than others. If you are sensitive in this way, avoid unknown wild plants. If you are extremely sensitive to poison ivy, avoid products from this family, including any parts from sumacs, mangoes, and cashews.
- Some edible wild plants, such as acorns and water lily rhizomes, are bitter. These bitter substances, usually tannin compounds, make them unpalatable. Boiling them in several changes of water will usually remove these bitter properties.
- Many valuable wild plants have high concentrations of oxalate compounds, also known as oxalic acid. Oxalates produce a sharp burning sensation in your mouth and throat and damage the kidneys. Baking, roasting, or drying usually destroys these oxalate crystals. The corm (bulb) of the jack-in-the-pulpit is known as the "Indian turnip," but you can eat it only after removing these crystals by slow baking or by drying.

### WARNING

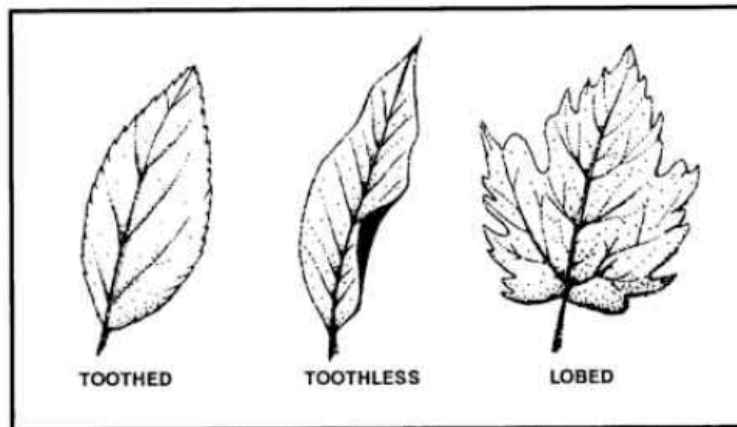
**Do not eat mushrooms in a survival situation! The only way to tell if a mushroom is edible is by positive identification. There is no room for experimentation. Symptoms**

of the most dangerous mushrooms affecting the central nervous system may show up after several days have passed when it is too late to reverse their effects.

### Plant Identification

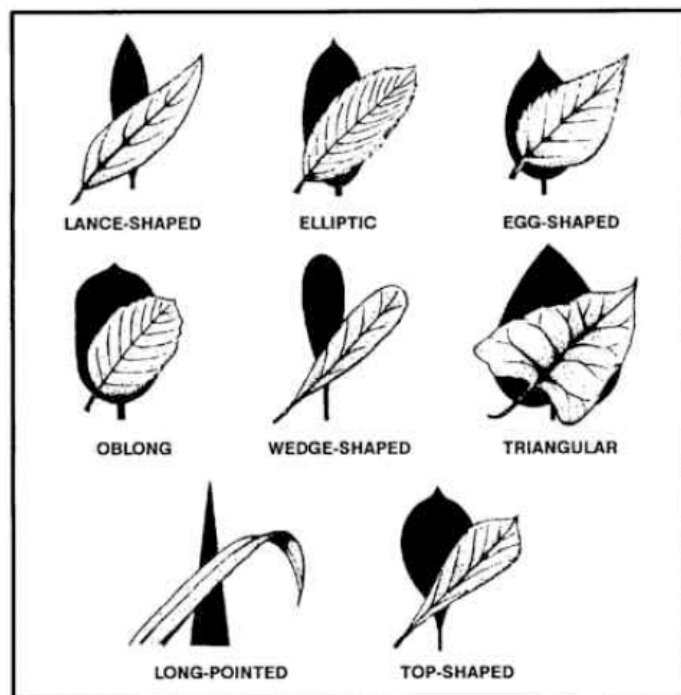
You identify plants, other than by memorising particular varieties through familiarity, by using such factors as leaf shape and margin, leaf arrangements, and root structure.

The basic leaf margins (**Figure 2-1**) are toothed, lobed, and toothless or smooth.



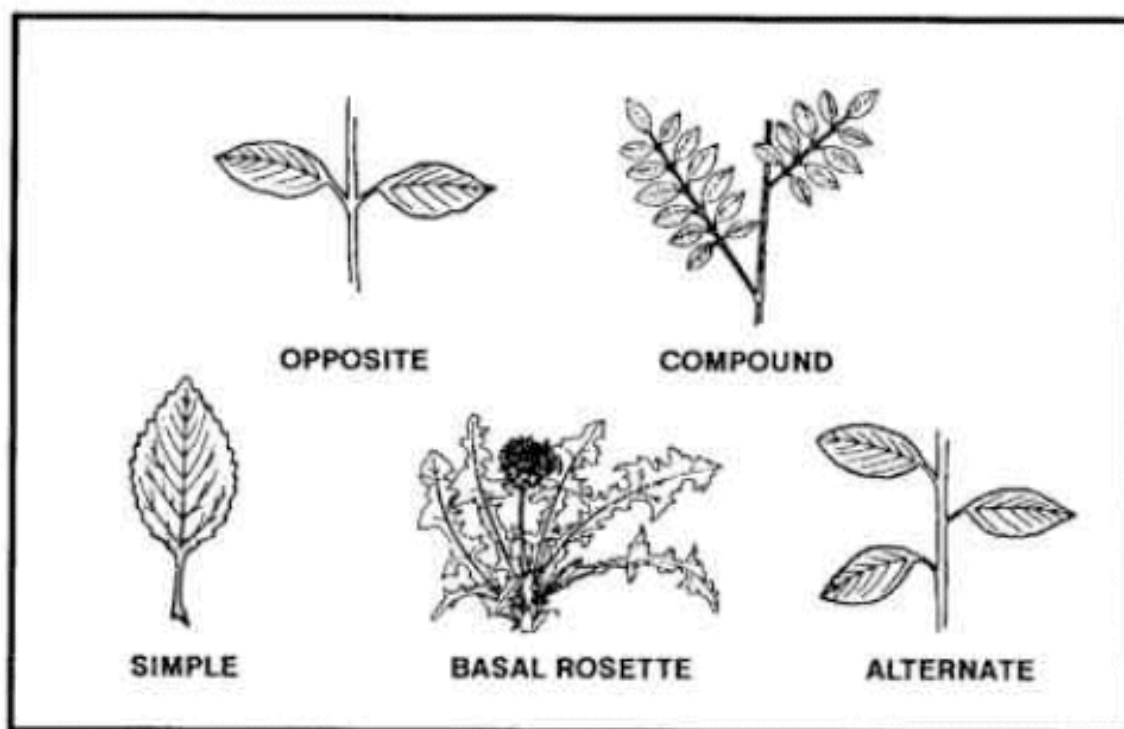
**Figure 2-1 Leaf margins**

These leaves may be lance-shaped, elliptical, egg-shaped, oblong, wedge-shaped, triangular, long-pointed, or top-shaped (**Figure 2-2**).



**Figure 2-2 Leaf shapes**

The basic types of leaf arrangements (**Figure 2-3**) are opposite, alternate, compound, simple, and basal rosette.



**Figure 2-3 Leaf arrangements**

The basic types of root structures (**Figure 2-4**) are the bulb, clove, taproot, tuber, rhizome, corm, and crown.

Bulbs are familiar to us as onions and, when sliced in half, will show concentric rings.

Cloves are those bulb like structures that remind us of garlic and will separate into small pieces when broken apart. This characteristic separates wild onions from wild garlic.

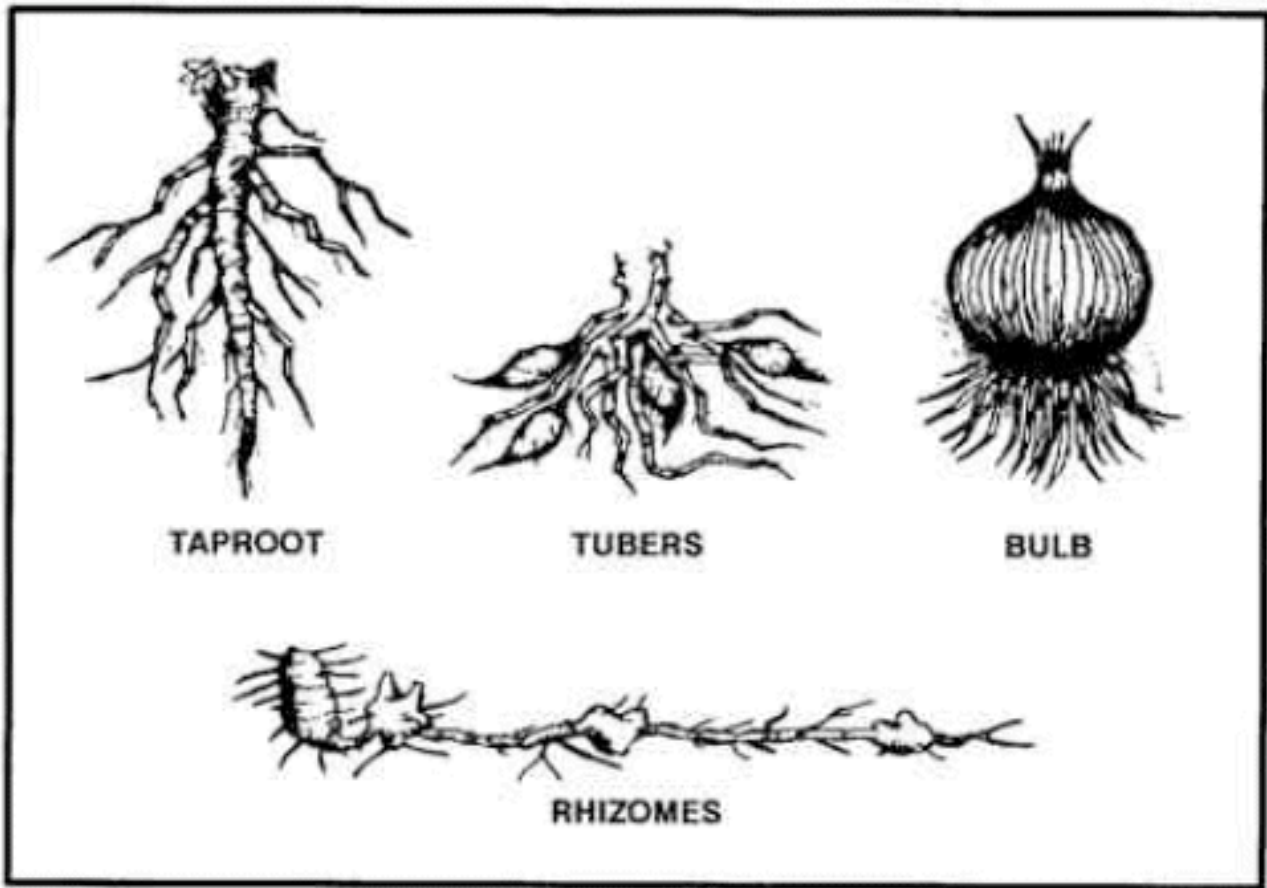
Taproots resemble carrots and may be single-rooted or branched, but usually only one plant stalk arises from each root.

Tubers are like potatoes and day lilies and you will find these structures either on strings or in clusters underneath the parent plants.

Rhizomes are large creeping rootstock or underground stems and many plants arise from the "eyes" of these roots.

Corms are similar to bulbs but are solid when cut rather than possessing rings.

A crown is the type of root structure found on plants such as asparagus and looks much like a mop head under the soil's surface.



***Figure 2-4 Root structures***

Learn as much as possible about plants you intend to use for food and their unique characteristics. Some plants have both edible and poisonous parts. Many are edible only at certain times of the year. Others may have poisonous relatives that look very similar to the ones you can eat or use for medicine.

### **Universal Edibility Test**

There are many plants throughout the world. Tasting or swallowing even a small portion of some can cause severe discomfort, extreme internal disorders, and even death. Therefore, if you have the slightest doubt about a plant's edibility, apply the Universal Edibility Test (**Figure 2-5**) before eating any portion of it.



## U.S MARINE CORP. WILD FOOD SURVIVAL

1	Test only one part of a potential food plant at a time.
2	Separate the plant into its basic components – leaves, stems, roots, buds, and flowers.
3	Smell the food for strong or acid odors. Remember, smell alone does not indicate a plant is edible or inedible.
4	Do not eat for 8 hours before starting the test.
5	During the 8 hours you abstain from eating, test for contact poisoning by placing a piece of the plant part you are testing on the inside of your elbow or wrist. Usually 15 minutes is enough time to allow for a reaction.
6	During the test period, take nothing by mouth except purified water and the plant part you are testing.
7	Select a small portion of a single part and prepare it the way you plan to eat it.
8	Before placing the prepared plant part in your mouth, touch a small portion (a pinch) to the outer surface of your lip to test for burning or itching.
9	If after 3 minutes there is no reaction on your lip, place the plant part on your tongue, holding it there for 15 minutes.
10	If there is no reaction, thoroughly chew a pinch and hold it in your mouth for 15 minutes. <b>Do not swallow.</b>
11	If no burning, itching, numbing, stinging, or other irritation occurs during the 15 minutes, swallow the food.
12	Wait 8 hours. If any ill effects occur during this period, induce vomiting and drink a lot of water.
13	If no ill effects occur, eat 0.25 cup of the same plant part prepared the same way. Wait another 8 hours. If no ill effects occur, the plant part as prepared is safe for eating.
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CAUTION</b></p> <p>Test all parts of the plant for edibility, as some plants have both edible and inedible parts. Do not assume that a part that proved edible when cooked is also edible when raw. Test the part raw to ensure edibility before eating raw. The same part or plant may produce varying reactions in different individuals.</p>	

*Figure 2-5 Universal edibility test*

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Before testing a plant for edibility, make sure there are enough plants to make the testing worth your time and effort. Each part of a plant (roots, leaves, flowers, and so on) requires more than 24 hours to test. Do not waste time testing a plant that is not relatively abundant in the area.

Remember, eating large portions of plant food on an empty stomach may cause diarrhoea, nausea, or cramps. Two good examples of this are such familiar foods as green apples and wild onions. Even after testing plant food and finding it safe, eat it in moderation.

You can see from the steps and time involved in testing for edibility just how important it is to be able to identify edible plants.

To avoid potentially poisonous plants, stay away from any wild or unknown plants that have:-

- Milky or discoloured sap.
- Beans, bulbs, or seeds inside pods.
- Bitter or soapy taste.
- Spines, fine hairs, or thorns.
- Dill, carrot, parsnip, or parsley like foliage.
- "Almond" scent in woody parts and leaves.
- Grain heads with pink, purplish, or black spurs.
- Three leafed growth pattern.

Using the above criteria as eliminators when choosing plants for the Universal Edibility Test will cause you to avoid some edible plants. More important, these criteria will often help you avoid plants that are potentially toxic to eat or touch.

An entire encyclopaedia of edible wild plants could be written, but space limits the number of plants presented here. Learn as much as possible about the plant life of the areas where you train regularly and where you expect to be travelling or working. Listed below are some of the most common edible and medicinal plants.

### Temperate Zone Food Plants

- Amaranth (*Amaranthus retroflexus* and other species)
- Arrowroot (*Sagittaria* species)
- Asparagus (*Asparagus officinalis*)
- Beechnut (*Fagus* species)
- Blackberries (*Rubus* species)
- Blueberries (*Vaccinium* species)
- Burdock (*Arctium lappa*)
- Cattail (*Typha* species)
- Chestnut (*Castanea* species)
- Chicory (*Cichorium intybus*)
- Chufa (*Cyperus esculentus*)
- Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)
- Daylily (*Hemerocallis fulva*)
- Nettle (*Urtica* species)
- Oaks (*Quercus* species)
- Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*)

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- Plantain (*Plantago* species)
- Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*)
- Prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia* species)
- Purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*)
- Sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*)
- Sheep sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*)
- Strawberries (*Fragaria* species)
- Thistle (*Cirsium* species)
- Water lily and lotus (*Nuphar*, *Nelumbo*, and other species)
- Wild onion and garlic (*Allium* species)
- Wild rose (*Rosa* species)
- Wood sorrel (*Oxalis* species)

### Tropical Zone Food Plants

- Bamboo (*Bambusa* and other species)
- Bananas (*Musa* species)
- Breadfruit (*Artocarpus incisa*)
- Cashew nut (*Anacardium occidentale*)
- Coconut (*Cocos nucifera*)
- Mango (*Mangifera indica*)
- Palms (various species)
- Papaya (*Carica* species)
- Sugar cane (*Saccharum officinarum*)
- Taro (*Colocasia* species)

### Desert Zone Food Plants

- Acacia (*Acacia farnesiana*)
- Agave (*Agave* species)
- Cactus (various species)
- Date palm (*Phoenix dactylifera*)
- Desert amaranth (*Amaranthus palmeri*)

### Seaweed

One plant you should never overlook is seaweed. It is a form of marine algae found on or near ocean shores. There are also some edible freshwater varieties. Seaweed is a valuable source of iodine, other minerals, and vitamin C. Large quantities of seaweed in an unaccustomed stomach can produce a severe laxative effect.

When gathering seaweed for food, find living plants attached to rocks or floating free. Seaweed washed onshore any length of time may be spoiled or decayed. You can dry freshly harvested seaweed for later use.

Its preparation for eating depends on the type of seaweed. You can dry thin and tender varieties in the sun or over a fire until crisp. Crush and add these to soups or broth. Boil thick, leathery seaweed for a short time to soften them. Eat them as a vegetable or with other foods. You can eat some varieties raw after testing for edibility.

### Seaweed You Can Eat

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- Dulse (*Rhodymenia palmata*)
- Green seaweed (*Ulva lactuca*)
- Irish moss (*Chondrus crispus*)
- Kelp (*Alaria esculenta*)
- Laver (*Porphyra* species)
- Mojaban (*Sargassum fulvellum*)
- Sugar wrack (*Laminaria saccharina*)

### Preparation of Plant Food

Although some plants or plant parts are edible raw, you must cook others to be edible or palatable. Edible means that a plant or food will provide you with necessary nutrients, while palatable means that it actually is pleasing to eat. Many wild plants are edible but barely palatable. It is a good idea to learn to identify, prepare, and eat wild foods.

Methods used to improve the taste of plant food include soaking, boiling, cooking, or leaching. Leaching is done by crushing the food (for example, acorns), placing it in a strainer, and pouring boiling water through it or immersing it in running water.

Boil leaves, stems, and buds until tender, changing the water, if necessary, to remove any bitterness.

Boil, bake, or roast tubers and roots. Drying helps to remove caustic oxalates from some roots like those in the *Arum* family.

Leach acorns in water, if necessary, to remove the bitterness. Some nuts, such as chestnuts, are good raw, but taste better roasted.

You can eat many grains and seeds raw until they mature. When hard or dry, you may have to boil or grind them into meal or flour.

The sap from many trees, such as maples, birches, walnuts, and sycamores, contains sugar. You may boil these saps down to a syrup for sweetening. It takes about 35 litres of maple sap to make one litre of maple syrup!

## PLANTS FOR MEDICINE

In a survival situation you will have to use what is available. In using plants and other natural remedies, positive identification of the plants involved is as critical as in using them for food. Proper use of these plants is equally important.

### Terms and Definitions

The following terms, and their definitions, are associated with medicinal plant use:

- *Poultice*. The name given to crushed leaves or other plant parts, possibly heated, that you apply to a wound or sore either directly or wrapped in cloth or paper.

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- *Infusion or tisane or tea.* The preparation of medicinal herbs for internal or external application. You place a small quantity of a herb in a container, pour hot water over it, and let it steep (covered or uncovered) before use.
- *Decoction.* The extract of a boiled down or simmered herb leaf or root. You add herb leaf or root to water. You bring them to a sustained boil or simmer to draw their chemicals into the water. The average ratio is about 28 to 56 grams (1 to 2 ounces) of herb to 0.5 litre of water.
- *Expressed juice.* Liquids or saps squeezed from plant material and either applied to the wound or made into another medicine.

Many natural remedies work slower than the medicines you know. Therefore, start with smaller doses and allow more time for them to take effect. Naturally, some will act more rapidly than others.

### Specific Remedies

The following remedies are for use only in a survival situation, not for routine use:

- *Diarrhoea.* Drink tea made from the roots of blackberries and their relatives to stop diarrhoea. White oak bark and other barks containing tannin are also effective. However, use them with caution when nothing else is available because of possible negative effects on the kidneys. You can also stop diarrhoea by eating white clay or campfire ashes. Tea made from cowberry or cranberry or hazel leaves works too.
- *Antihemorrhagics.* Make medications to stop bleeding from a poultice of the puffball mushroom, from plantain leaves, or most effectively from the leaves of the common yarrow or woundwort (*Achillea millefolium*).
- *Antiseptics.* Use to cleanse wounds, sores, or rashes. You can make them from the expressed juice from wild onion or garlic, or expressed juice from chickweed leaves or the crushed leaves of dock. You can also make antiseptics from a decoction of burdock root, mallow leaves or roots, or white oak bark. All these medications are for external use only.
- *Fevers.* Treat a fever with a tea made from willow bark, an infusion of elder flowers or fruit, linden flower tea, or elm bark decoction.
- *Colds and sore throats.* Treat these illnesses with a decoction made from either plantain leaves or willow bark. You can also use a tea made from burdock roots, mallow or mullein flowers or roots, or mint leaves.
- *Aches, pains, and sprains.* Treat with externally applied poultices of dock, plantain, chickweed, willow bark, garlic, or sorrel. You can also use salves made by mixing the expressed juices of these plants in animal fat or vegetable oils.
- *Itching.* Relieve the itch from insect bites, sunburn, or plant poisoning rashes by applying a poultice of jewelweed (*Impatiens biflora*) or witch hazel leaves (*Hamamelis virginiana*). The jewelweed juice will help when applied to poison ivy



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rashes or insect stings. It works on sunburn as well as aloe vera.

- *Sedatives.* Get help in falling asleep by brewing a tea made from mint leaves or passionflower leaves.
- *Haemorrhoids.* Treat them with external washes from elm bark or oak bark tea, from the expressed juice of plantain leaves, or from a Solomon's seal root decoction.
- *Constipation.* Relieve constipation by drinking decoctions from dandelion leaves, rose hips, or walnut bark. Eating raw day lily flowers will also help.
- *Worms or intestinal parasites.* Using moderation, treat with tea made from tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) or from wild carrot leaves.
- *Gas and cramps.* Use a tea made from carrot seeds as an anti flatulent; use tea made from mint leaves to settle the stomach.
- *Anti-fungal washes.* Make a decoction of walnut leaves or oak bark or acorns to treat ringworm and athlete's foot. Apply frequently to the site, alternating with exposure to direct sunlight.

### Miscellaneous Uses Of Plants

- Make dyes from various plants to colour clothing or to camouflage your skin. Usually, you will have to boil the plants to get the best results. Onion skins produce yellow, walnut hulls produce brown, and pokeberries provide a purple dye.
- Make fibres and cordage from plant fibres. Most commonly used are the stems from nettles and milkweeds, yucca plants, and the inner bark of trees like the linden.
- Make fish poison by immersing walnut hulls in a small area of quiet water.
- This poison makes it impossible for the fish to breathe but doesn't adversely affect their edibility.
- Make tinder for starting fires from cattail fluff, cedar bark, lighter knot wood from pine trees, or hardened sap from resinous wood trees.
- Make insulation by fluffing up female cattail heads or milkweed down.
- Make insect repellents by applying the expressed juice of wild garlic or onion to the skin, by placing sassafras leaves in your shelter, or by burning or smudging cattail seed hair fibres.

Plants can be your ally as long as you use them cautiously. The key to the safe use of plants is positive identification whether you use them as food or medicine or in constructing shelters or equipment.

## POISONOUS PLANTS

*Successful use of plants in a survival situation depends on positive identification. Knowing poisonous plants is as important to a survivor as*

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*knowing edible plants. Knowing the poisonous plants will help you avoid sustaining injuries from them.*

### HOW PLANTS POISON

Plants generally poison by:-

- *Ingestion.* When a person eats a part of a poisonous plant.
- *Contact.* When a person makes contact with a poisonous plant that causes any type of skin irritation or dermatitis.
- *Absorption or inhalation.* When a person either absorbs the poison through the skin or inhales it into the respiratory system.

Plant poisoning ranges from minor irritation to death. A common question asked is, "How poisonous is this plant?" It is difficult to say how poisonous plants are because--

- Some plants require contact with a large amount of the plant before noticing any adverse reaction while others will cause death with only a small amount.
- Every plant will vary in the amount of toxins it contains due to different growing conditions and slight variations in subspecies.
- Every person has a different level of resistance to toxic substances.
- Some persons may be more sensitive to a particular plant.

### Some common misconceptions about poisonous plants are:-

- *Watch the animals and eat what they eat.* Most of the time this statement is true, but some animals can eat plants that are poisonous to humans.
- *Boil the plant in water and any poisons will be removed.* Boiling removes many poisons, but not all.
- *Plants with a red colour are poisonous.* Some plants that are red are poisonous, but not all.

The point is there is no one rule to aid in identifying poisonous plants. You must make an effort to learn as much about them as possible.

### ALL ABOUT PLANTS

It is to your benefit to learn as much about plants as possible. Many poisonous plants look like their edible relatives or like other edible plants. For example, poison hemlock appears very similar to wild carrot. Certain plants are safe to eat in certain seasons or stages of growth and poisonous in other stages. For example, the leaves of the pokeweed are edible when it first starts to grow, but it soon becomes poisonous. You can eat some plants and their fruits only when they are ripe. For example, the ripe fruit of may apple is edible, but all other parts and the green fruit are poisonous. Some plants contain both

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edible and poisonous parts; potatoes and tomatoes are common plant foods, but their green parts are poisonous.

Some plants become toxic after wilting. For example, when the black cherry starts to wilt, hydrocyanic acid develops. Specific preparation methods make some plants edible that are poisonous raw. You can eat the thinly sliced and thoroughly dried corms (drying may take a year) of the jack-in-the-pulpit, but they are poisonous if not thoroughly dried. Learn to identify and use plants before a survival situation. Some sources of information about plants are pamphlets, books, films, nature trails, botanical gardens, local markets, and local natives. Gather and cross-reference information from as many sources as possible, because many sources will not contain all the information needed.

### RULES FOR AVOIDING POISONOUS PLANTS

Your best policy is to be able to look at a plant and identify it with absolute certainty and to know its uses or dangers. Many times this is not possible. If you have little or no knowledge of the local vegetation, use the rules to select plants for the "**Universal Edibility Test**." Remember, avoid:-

- All mushrooms. Mushroom identification is very difficult and must be precise, even more so than with other plants. Some mushrooms cause death very quickly. Some mushrooms have no known antidote. Two general types of mushroom poisoning are gastrointestinal and central nervous system.
- Contact with or touching plants unnecessarily.

### CONTACT DERMATITIS

Contact dermatitis from plants will usually cause the most trouble in the field. The effects may be persistent, spread by scratching, and are particularly dangerous if there is contact in or around the eyes.

The principal toxin of these plants is usually an oil that gets on the skin upon contact with the plant. The oil can also get on equipment and then infect whoever touches the equipment. Never burn a contact poisonous plant because the smoke may be as harmful as the plant. There is a greater danger of being affected when overheated and sweating. The infection may be local or it may spread over the body.

Symptoms may take from a few hours to several days to appear. Signs and symptoms can include burning, reddening, itching, swelling, and blisters.

When you first contact the poisonous plants or the first symptoms appear, try to remove the oil by washing with soap and cold water. If water is not available, wipe your skin repeatedly with dirt or sand. Do not use dirt if blisters have developed. The dirt may break open the blisters and leave the body open to infection. After you have removed the oil, dry the area. You can wash with a tannic acid solution and crush and rub jewelweed on the affected area to treat plant-caused rashes. You can make tannic acid from oak bark.

Poisonous plants that cause contact dermatitis are:-

- Cowhage.

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- Poison ivy.
- Poison oak.
- Poison sumac.
- Rengas tree.
- Trumpet vine.

### **INGESTION POISONING**

Ingestion poisoning can be very serious and could lead to death very quickly. Do not eat any plant unless you have positively identified it first. Keep a log of all plants eaten.

Signs and symptoms of ingestion poisoning can include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal cramps, depressed heartbeat and respiration, headaches, hallucinations, dry mouth, unconsciousness, coma, and death.

If you suspect plant poisoning, try to remove the poisonous material from the victim's mouth and stomach as soon as possible. Induce vomiting by tickling the back of his throat or by giving him warm saltwater, if he is conscious. Dilute the poison by administering large quantities of water or milk, if he is conscious.

The following plants can cause ingestion poisoning if eaten:

- Castor bean.
- Chinaberry.
- Death camas.
- Lantana.
- Manchineel.
- Oleander.
- Pangi.
- Physic nut.
- Poison and water hemlocks.
- Rosary pea.
- Strychnine tree.