

Growing Traditional Tobacco Nsema

March 16, 2011 at 12:06pm

Planting Tobacco, Nsema

Please remember your traditional protocols. No woman on her moon time should be allowed to go near your tobacco plants. This insures their strength. As a grandmother it is a natural thing for me to do. I had a dream about these plants before I ever had the seeds. Remember they are sacred, a gift from our Creator. When first man asked the Creator, when i go there you will talk to me but how do I talk to you. Creator then made tobacco to grow. Use this tobacco and i will always hear you. I offer my tobacco every morning. I watch over my tobacco plants and love them. The seeds I grow are original unmodified plants they came from Kansas originally. Thought to be from the first original seeds. A blessing. I give credit to Nowatin, Dale Thomas for his encouragement of growing and processing nsema. Also Donnie Dowd who gave me my first little jar of nsema when my daughter Laura passed away in 1995. And for Beaver Pelcher who grew this wonderful plant in his greenhouses at 7th Generations for the Sagniaaw Chippewa Tribe...and for the dream the grandmothers brought me, of a basket of nsema they gifted me. We refrigerate our tobacco seeds first...that lets the seeds go to sleep. The Sacred Seed Repository in E. Lansing, recommended that we store them in the refrigerator.(Rose Lake Plant Material Center)

1. Prepare the place for your seeds. I usually buy a seedling flat box starter and place the soil in the container and water it. I use Miracle Grow soil but you can use any kind.

I take my index pointing finger and gently leave an impression where the seed will go. I place one seed in each impression about an inch apart.

2. I cover the seeds with soil gently. I sing the Tobacco song that Doreen Day wrote. Then I use a water mister spray on the entire box. I close the seed starter box. I place my box on a table by a sunny window and wait. It will take about 5-7 days to germinate.

You have to keep the lid on the box and make sure it is misted every day when the tobacco plants are tiny.

3. When the plants are bigger and actually have a strong stalk of at least the size of a ball point pen cartridge, I begin preparing for their transplant. I use the little bio-degradable boxes, fill with soil and do the same thing I did before, finger impression for the hole. Then using a pencil, I take the tiny plant out of the seedling box and put it in the other baby seedling box. Some people like to just put it in this tiny box to start with but the plants can clump together and you lose a lot of plants because they are so delicate. If you put them in the box, they are ready for transplant at different times.

4. I watch the plants and water them carefully every day, singing our mide water song to them every day. When they are at least six inches tall, I begin preparing the soil for them outside. I plant the biodegradable container as well. You do not have to plant in the soil if you do not have the land for it. When I lived in an apartment, I grew my plants on the ledge in a big pot ant they did just fine. Just can't over water. Let the bees do their job pollinating. Duck fertilizer to your garden does wonders in how healthy they grow.

I plant the baby plants deep in the earth with just the leaves sticking up. Then I make a little mound of earth around them. Dig the rows to water them. Baby them, sing to them. Make food

offering for the spirit of the plant. Thanking them and telling them, they will be medicine for the people.

5. Harvest the leaves! remember to tobacco them with prayers. When the leaves are the size of your hand, I pick them, even a few at a time as the leaves regenerate. Place on towels, wilt them in a dark place for a day and then strip away the leaf veins with sissors. Then I cut the tobacco in real small pieces. Drying for another day or two, depending on the humidity in your home, then cut the tobacco real small and allow to wilt one more day. I hand roll into a ball each small. They are then completely dried in a room without direct sunlight to keep it green. store in a glass jar.

6. When the seed pods are dry I snip them off the stalks. Please allow the green pods to open and flower as this give the bees thier pollen as they prepare for their travels. Make sure they are dry, hand in a good place, catching any seeds that may fall. Store the dry pods and seeds in your refrigerator for next year. They must be kept cool.

When dried this way they are easy to handle and they do not crumble apart. Potawatomi elders taught me this. Takes time, but they are worth it. Some people just dry the leaves in a brown paper bag, or hang them upside down to dry but they will crumble, and flake but are still good. You have to pick before the frost, watch the frost warnings carefully. The flowers are good to smoke too. I return the veins I cut back to earth where my garden is.

If the mosiac blight gets to your plants make sure you do not pick them or add to your healthy leaves. They need to be disposed of seperately and using other sissors. Make sure your hands and sissors are clean. Some people are sensitive to the sticky substnace on the leaves, Wash hand often. Please do not dry leaves in the over or microwave, but dry aways from sunlight. When my tobacco is completley processed, I place them in a glass jar, ready when needed. Then only use a few grains at a time for my tobacco prayers. I share a feast with my plants when they are harvested.

I just learned a new method too. You take 5 leaves and tie them to cotton piece of yarn about 36 inches long. Keep adding leave bunches. When they dry they keep the moisture in them. Dry about 4 days depending on your humidity. When they are almost dry but still plyable they will feel thick. Gently take them from the strings and flatten them out. Remove the veins. Cut into small pieces and let dry completly away from the light. They will remain plyable and green but will not be hardened.

If your leaves had brown blotchs on them, they may be getting a virus from tomatoe blight or moziac blight. Remove these from your garden and do not use as medicine. Thank them. Always thank your plant, make food offering. I store my tobacco in a jar. I use this sacred tobacco for all sweat lodge request and for my morning prayer and all midewewin ceremonie.

They are so beautiful.

menasekwe@yahoo.com

I will take pictures of this process this year. Remember Tobacco is sacred, observe the traditional protocols of not using alcohol or drugs and women should not be anywhere near the plants on their moon cycle. I dreamed about growing these plants before I started. You do not leave your plants overnight, without someone tending them. They have a strong spirit. Talk to

your plants, sing to them, say your morning prayers with them. Honor this time you get to spend with this growing season. Your good thoughts will be rewarded when the prayers are offered up. There are some people who have healing ceremonies and only use this sacred tobacco. If you have questions, there are many elders in the community that you can ask.

Sah-mah (Tobacco) *

Gee Zah- gay- e- goo (I love you)

Gee Me-gwetch -wayn ne- me - goo (I thank you)

Gee Zah Wayn ne- me- goo (I respect you)

*Song given by Doreen Day, tune of the New Water Song

Megwetch Kinagwayah,
Beatrice Menase' Kwe Jackson
Migizii Doodem
MideKwe endow

Nsema growing in the garden.

Keep this plant away from tomatoes to protect it from virus. I try to keep my weeded. Careful to give them lots of water in the early stages. Sometimes they are heavy and need to be supported by branches. Nsema growing in the garden. Keep this plant away from tomatoes to protect it from virus. I try to keep my weeded. Careful to give them lots of water in the early stages. Sometimes they are heavy and need to be supported by branches. Carefully cutting the stems and veins before drying. Carefully cutting the stems and veins before drying.

Cutting into small piece then letting it dry slightly in a dark place. Cutting into small piece then letting it dry slightly in a dark place.

The cut up tobacco has wilted and before it is dry, I rolled it into small little balls. It then dries another day out of the light and then it is ready to put into a glass jar for use. Please do not store it in plastic. The cut up tobacco has wilted and before it is dry, I rolled it into small little balls. It then dries another day out of the light and then it is ready to put into a glass jar for use.

Please do not store it in plastic.

When you are processing your tobacco, they may spring baby plants by themselves, just put in another container and water gently. Remember sunshine is very important. Don't water too much. and the seed shells are drying. You will need to dry completely and then store in a glass jar in your refrigerator until you are ready to grow them again. Tobacco Flowers, and the seed shells are drying.

Plants can be grown in pots on your window sill and placed in the the ground when all danger of frost is over. They need to be protected from too much water and too much wind.

Prepare the best garden location you can. Plant outside after all frost dangers, Mine were planted outside fathers day when they were just 4 inches tall. Prepare the best garden location you can.







