

Guidelines for Harvesters

1. Training:

- Training starts at the beginning of the Harvesting season (1 March)
- SUSTAINABILITY – avoidance of depletion of natural resources, in order to have a fruitful future.
- Training on various platforms.
- Ecoso dynamics Co-Ordinator of sourcing and purchasing, Mr Mukriste Mbunga visits various conservancies, where he fills in the knowledge, guideline booklets are handed out.
- NNF (Namibia Nature Foundation) Is covering many other areas.
- GACP = Good Architectural Collecting Practices = is set of guidelines covering areas of harvesting, collection, processing, packaging, personnel, equipment, documentation – for sake of satisfying the minimum required quality control.

2. Preparation:

a. Permit:

A harvester gets a valid permit from the nearest MEFT office (the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism) before he starts harvesting. Personal details to be entered, as well as the area, the local authority, to sign the application form. Once this has been done, the harvester goes back to the MET office with the form and his ID document. Bigger groups need to enter all the names. MEFT considers the application and supplies the permit with a permit number.

This permit **may not be used by anybody whose name is not on the permit.**
The harvester may not harvest in an area which is not stated on the permit.
Harvesting is only allowed between 1 March and 31 October each year.

b. Return Forms:

After each sale, (buyers also need permits) the harvesters return form must be filled in (on back of permit): Date of sale, details of buyer, species, number of bags & weight, and handed in before end November.

This form enables the Ministry to have a control, and protect the resources.

3. Things to remember before harvesting:

- Devils Claw plants need to recover for 3 years after they have been harvested.
- Count the Harpago Plant for your harvest during late January, before obtaining the permit.

- Do a sketch of the area from the patches where you will harvest.
- Only count rooted plants within the linewidth of your stretched out arms.

Harvesting:

Devils claw has a main taproot growing down from where the stems and leaves grow above the ground. The side tubers grow off this main taproot.

People want to buy Devils Claw because of the substance (called harpagoside) because it is a very good medicine. **This substance is not found in the taproot.**

When you harvest a fruit tree, you don't chop down the whole tree to get the fruit – Likewise, “sustainable harvesting” of Devils Claw will allow the plant to give many more harvests in the future.

The side tubers store water and food for the plant to survive during the dry season. Only half of the side tubers should be harvested – **if they are all taken, the plant will die.**

How to dig:

If the main root is damaged or removed the plant will die.

The best way to avoid causing damage to the root, is to use a strong sharpened stick, or flattened crowbar. Using a spade is faster but it can damage the roots.

Dig about 20 cm away from the plant. This will help to protect the main root.

Only dig on one side of the plant. Remember that at least half of the side tubers should be left alone, or the plant will die.

Choose older plants to harvest. They usually have longer stems and leaves. Leave younger plants for next year.

Filling the hole:

When you have finished harvesting the side tubers, **you must put all the sand back into the hole.**

Leaving a open hole is dangerous for wild animals and cattle. They can trip and break a leg, or young ones not able to get out.

Stamp down the sand after you put it back.

The plant might die if the hole is not filled.

Slicing and quality

Namibian Devils Claw is sold on the international market, mainly in Europe. It is very important to maintain high quality standards – low quality will be rejected.

Wait after the rainy season before slicing the tubers, otherwise they may become rotten.

You can store them in a cool clean dry room, or bury them in the sand.

Hands must be washed thoroughly with clean water before slicing.

All sand to be removed, wash with fresh clean water before cutting.

Slices to be quite thin, twice as thick as a matchstick.

Use a clean, sharp stainless-steel knife.

If parts are rotten, or damaged, cut them out.

Make sure not sand and dirt, or other matter get mixed in with the Devils claw.

Drying the sliced side tubers:

If side tubers are wet, they are worth nothing.

Shade netting which is lifted off the ground- to be away from sand insects, dirt and animal droppings. Shaded place would be an advantage.

Carefully lay the slices on the netting, may not lie on top of each other.

Leave on netting for at least seven day, they have to be completely dry before packing.

Slicing is to be done after the rainy season.

Packing and storing:

Once slices properly dry, they can be packed in bags. (if they can be broken into two pieces, they are properly dry)

Only new, clean and dry bags can be used. Old bags will ruin the devils claw, as you don't know what was in it.

Store the bags in a clean, dry place, not directly on the floor. No animals is allowed near them.

Make the most of the devils Claw resource

A high quality product brings in more money.

Keep records of weight of dried tubers in the bags, to whom sold, for how much.

Harvesters who work together in a group can make sure they get a fair price form the Devils Claw buyers. Find a buyer before you harvest, so that you know how much to harvest, and what price you will be paid.

Devils Claw is a Namibian product – take pride in producing a quality product and protecting the resource.