



## PROJECT PROPOSAL

### Envisioning a Cascadian Ethnobotany for the Peak Oil Era

The dominant model of development is characterized by (1) neoliberal structural arrangements which are globalizing economic markets, (2) an 'environmental bubble economy' which is plundering natural resources with minimal regard for sustainability, and (3) cheap hydrocarbon fuels which are being rapidly depleted without transitional planning.

It is increasingly apparent that the continuation of this approach to development will soon come to an end, doomed by its greedy thirst for profits at the expense of the well being of people, communities, cultures, and ecosystems.

Its collapse will be accompanied by severe dislocations, the extent of which will depend in part upon the anticipatory preparations made by people manifesting a sustainable model of development.

A sustainable approach to development will certainly emphasize localization in the production of basic commodities. A localized approach to development would extensively develop and utilize local resources to create products for local markets. Many of these local resources will come from plant materials.

The economic use of plants that would occur in a sustainable, locally focused economy will be very different than occurs in the present economy. Plants will be used to meet a wider range of the local society's material needs. There will be a substantial increase in both the diversity and amount of botanical resources that are given economic use. And many locally available, plant-based materials will be substituted for the synthetic or metal based materials in present use.

Transition to a sustainable economy will therefore require a re-envisioning of the ethnobotany of the Cascadia bioregion. It is necessary to reassess not only the potential uses of plants that can grow in this region, but also to conceptualize the kinds of research, infrastructure development, and marketing initiatives that would be required to enable these potential uses to be economically viable.

This Prout Institute (PI) paper is a pilot study to further efforts toward conversion to a new silviculture and agro-industry base in the Cascadia Bioregion. The study's intent is not to be exhaustive, but to point toward promising new plants, new products, new processes, and new markets that could emerge based on a future regional ethnobotany.

In this study, plant material uses are divided into the following categories:

- 1] foods
  - produce
  - herbs

- grains
  - sweeteners
  - oils
  - animal feed
- 2] fuels
  - 3] fibers
  - 4] medicines
  - 5] building materials
  - 6] chemicals, dyes, and industrial products
  - 7] handcraft, household amenities, and decorative products
  - 8] soil fertility

Within each category, a number of plants that appear to have outstanding potential are identified. In assessing the potential of a plant material, use is made of a criteria matrix identified by the PROUT model of development as constituting necessary factors for sound developmental planning. These factors are:

- 1] productivity
- 2] collective necessity
- 3] purchasing capacity
- 4] cost of production
- 5] sustainability

It is hoped that this study will stimulate interest in creating agricultural and forestry research centers in sub-regional planning districts of the bioregion. Planning districts are geographic areas appropriately sized and configured to optimize decentralized socioeconomic planning. The PI has drafted a map that gives proposed demarcations of planning districts for Cascadia.

The PI encourages the Eugene Permaculture Guild, along with appropriate partner groups and individuals, to promote the creation of such a research center as a component of the support structure it envisions building to assist the growth of a sustainable local economy.

The PI recommends that such a research center would incorporate the following features and approaches:

- 1] be organized and operated as a cooperative venture
- 2] receive policy input from affiliated agricultural and forestry cooperatives
- 3] maintain active coordination with a network of agricultural/forestry research stations in other planning units in the bioregion
- 4] distribute research projects, where appropriate, to local agricultural and forestry cooperatives, thereby encouraging a culture of research among farm and forest products coops.

The PI hopes that this study, along with research and development efforts it may stimulate, will provide an informed basis for capitalizing new agro-industry and silvaculture enterprises and for developing markets for new, locally produced plant products.

If this were to be achieved, local employment in meaningful work would be stimulated, rural lands would become more valued for production than for development, the flow of money in the local economy would increase, community control of the local economy would be greater, and the availability of basic commodities would become more secure.