**Plants in Ainu Life**

Plants were a key source of food and medicine for Ainu. They foraged for wild plants and also cultivated hardy grains such as foxtail millet and barnyard millet.

They gathered the leaves of Siberian onion (*pukusa*), butterbur, and eastern skunk cabbage to flavor soups and stews, and dug up a variety of peanut (*aha*) to boil and mix with grains. The potato-like tubers of *toma*, a species of poppy, were peeled and dried to eat later and also used to treat stomach pain and headaches.

The bulb of the giant woodland lily (*turep*) was an important source of starch and fiber through the winter months. The bulbs were harvested in the summer, then crushed and soaked in water to release their starch, which was dried and used to make porridge-like dishes. The starch was also used to treat stomach pain. The remaining fiber was fermented and dried

into disks to be added to soups and stews.

From late summer through autumn, Ainu gathered wild grapes, strawberries, blue honeysuckle berries, walnuts, and other fruit and nuts. The fruit of the crimson glory vine (*hat*), a native grape, was eaten fresh, and the vines used for rope, and for weaving. The waxy berries of the Amur cork tree (*sikerpe*) were eaten fresh or dried, added to soups, or paired with bear or deer meat to add a refreshing citrus flavor. The dried berry was used to relieve stomach pain and cold symptoms.