

Angelica — Uriisaq

URIISAT TAK'UT. – THE ANGELICA ARE TALL.



Photo: Elder Lucille Davis demonstrates the application of angelica as bug repellent. Photo by Priscilla Russell, courtesy of the KANA collection.

Angelica (*Angelica lucida*) is a large, leafy herb with a stout fleshy stem and small, greenish-white flowers that form a large head. This aromatic plant, which grows in Kodiak's coastal meadows, on beaches, and along streambanks, is prized for its healing qualities. However, be careful not to mistake angelica for its extremely poisonous cousin, the deadly water hemlock. Both are members of the parsley family. Angelica can only be picked and used during the warm summer months because it does not preserve well.

In Alutiiq communities, people value angelica as a steam bath switch and medicinal herb. Alutiiq people may also put angelica leaves on the floor of their steam baths to perfume the warm air and open the sinuses. Others wave the plant's leafy stem in the heat of a steam bath and rub it on their bodies to relieve aches and pains. The plant is also said to contain oils that heal and revitalize the skin. In some villages, people rub the fleshy, inner part of the stem and leaves on their skin to heal skin irritations. Similarly, rheumatism was once treated with wet, heated angelica leaves.

Angelica is also useful outdoors. Hikers use the plant's stems to switch away bugs, and hunters rub their hands with angelica leaves before touching animal traps to hide their human scent.