DEVIL’S CLUB, *Oplopanax horridus*

This impressive Pacific Northwest native plant is a member of the Ginseng family and it is wonderful to work with in spite of its prickly spines. This beautiful, giant is a teacher of patience, caution and insight into the evolutionary genius of the botanical realm. Both the leaves and the stalks are covered in sharp spines. Two sources that will give you more information about this powerful plant include *Pacific Northwest Medicinal Plants* by Scott Kloos and *Edible and Medicinal Plants of the West* by Gregory L. Tilford. Both authors outline its importance as a respiratory medicinal as well as its use to help regulate blood sugar levels, therefore making it useful in the treatment of adult onset diabetes. Scott emphasizes the plant’s usefulness to support and nourish the adrenals and to calm an overactive nervous system. He writes, “This tall imposing member of the ginseng family is a protector of the forest and is one of the most important shamanic plants of the Northwest native peoples.” (157)

Scott gives practical information for the identification and harvest as well as insight into the spiritual applications of this phenomenal plant. He writes, “Devil’s club teaches about energetic boundaries. It helps those who are affected by and may feel overwhelmed by external energies and is particularly beneficial for people practicing the healing arts.”

I was inspired to work with this plant for several reasons, one of course, were its potent medicinal properties. However, it was the challenge of harvesting as well as its unique structural qualities that motivated me to search in the early spring for roots and stalks before the leaves emerged.

As a forager I practice sustainability in all of my harvesting practices. As a holistic nurse I’m especially interested in engaging with nature that not only supports my own work but that of fellow practitioners. The beauty and qualities of Devil’s Club inspired me to craft a talisman in the form of these pendants. The challenge was in the harvest and preparation of the wood, but once the spines are removed it is easy to work with as it’s a soft wood and exceptionally light weight. I found the fragrance emitted in the preparation and crafting very pleasant and energizing!

Each of these pendants is hand-crafted by me with love and respect. I hope that you enjoy wearing it as much as I enjoyed making it~