

## Secrets of 9 Palms Praying Mantis

Floyd Burk

*David Carradine and a Kung Fu Master Launch an Exciting New Art!*

*"Each of the nine palms is an expression that gives people something they can relate to—more than saying, 'It's an exercise.' It's similar to the 'wax on, wax off' stuff from the Karate Kid movie. Rather than teaching people kicking, punching and forms that are set, Rob Moses developed this whole program that gets people to use their imagination while maintaining free but purposeful movement. The selfdefense thing is still there, but it is more of a byproduct."—David Carradine*

Nine-palms praying mantis kung fu is a system of expressions that allow you to master yourself while achieving better health and fitness, a positive attitude and improved selfdefense abilities. Those expressions take you on a journey of circles, figure-eights, spirals, straight lines, ellipses and more.

They include kicks, punches, blocks, locks, throws—virtually anything can be put into the movements. The only restriction is that you must adhere to the four pillars upon which the system rests: Seek the truth in your training, help others and do not be selfish, strive to be free-thinking and do not limit your imagination. The hybrid kung fu system—which teaches that the priorities of a martial artist's training are health, well-being and creativity—has relegated actual combat to a secondary role.

Consequently, many of its training methods reflect ordinary activities or exercises that may not always be identifiable as fighting techniques. This article, however, will focus on the combative elements of nine palms, which can be easily combined into thousands of viable self-defense routines.

### Line Mantis

The first expression of nine palms is the line mantis. It involves imagining an outstretched rope and pretending to pull it toward you with both hands. Then you reverse directions as if you were slowly letting the rope be pulled away from you.

The next step is to pull yourself forward or backward along the length of the imaginary rope. Envision a cable tied to a pole on either side of a river. Sitting in a canoe, you pull yourself from one shore to the other. This exercise is intended to give you a better idea of your body's weight and the resistance it encounters as you pull, twist and move.

At more advanced levels, you can pretend that you have several ropes tied at different heights from one side of your kwoon (school) to the other. You alter your stances from high to low as



**Nine-palms creator Rob Moses demonstrates the rope-pulling posture of the line mantis.**



**Although its primary benefits are health related, ninepalms praying mantis kung fu includes all the customary hand and foot techniques a person will need for self-defense.**



**The upstream mantis uses the hands to "swim against the current."**



you travel down the lines. You can also vary the rope diameter—from one you can barely get your hands around to one you have to use your fingertips to tug.

Practicing the line mantis improves your ability to punch straight and helps you develop your grip and the torque you need to manipulate an opponent. One of its many self-defense applications is as follows: As an attacker reaches for you, intercept his arm and pull him into a palm-heel smash with your other hand. You've turned the attacker into the rope and defeated him.

"Line mantis is not limited to ropes, grabs and strikes," says nine-palms creator Rob Moses. "Any linear action, such as moving into a revolving door or boarding a subway train, can be an application of line mantis. Being creative is what it's all about."

## Casting Mantis

The next expression utilizes casting motions that convey numerous benefits, including improved throws, off-balancing techniques, evasion tactics and the ability to use your opponent's attack against him. The casting mantis brings into play inertia, weight distribution and the ability to see past yourself—in other words, to project your chi (internal energy).

Beginning your practice of the casting mantis is as easy as fishing. Pick up your imaginary fishing pole, step forward and cast out your line. Pause as you hear the splash in the distance, then take a few steps in the opposite direction as you feel the line become taut. Practice overhead casts and side-arm casts, then try it with both arms. To progress to the next level, pretend you are picking up a large fishing net that is so heavy you need to use both hands.

Toss the net out, then pull it back. Do this continuously using figure-eights, spirals, circles or other patterns until the action becomes smooth and seems to flow. Do it while you move your body in different directions and be sure to incorporate the low horse stance and front stance.

"You will gain the ability to crack a whip, yank the carpet out from under the enemy's feet, throw your opponent on his head or throw your ex's crap out of the house," says Moses, who teaches kung fu to David Carradine. "Whatever you come up with will make it fun and help you develop your senses."

## Vortex Mantis

Practitioners of virtually any art can reap numerous benefits from the male and female principles of the vortex mantis.

The male, or forward-oriented, applications are patterned after the shape of a teardrop. You reach forward with both hands and



The hurricane mantis is similar to the line mantis but offers more interaction with the environment.



Rob Moses illustrates how the gyro mantis employs pedaling hand motions while a kick is delivered.



Rob Moses' vortex mantis uses the arms to form the outline of a teardrop.



The empty mantis is similar to the "holding the ball" exercise taught in tai chi classes.



touch your fingertips, thus forming the outline of a teardrop—or vortex—with your arms. No matter where you aim your hands, that direction will become the focal point for your strikes, and your arms will trace the path along which the energy will travel. From here you can begin to alternate strikes to that point. A boxer might opt for hook punches, jabs, uppercuts and crosses, while a kung fu stylist might choose finger jabs or palm strikes. With practice, you will be able to visualize the teardrop shape and select targets without even pointing your hands.

In the female, or gathering-in, vortex mantis, the end of the teardrop is located on your body. Imagine a funnel that is formed by placing your palms together with your hands open and pulling them toward your torso. This becomes a point of leverage you can use to gather in your opponent's techniques—in much the same way that you catch a football by making contact with it while your arms are extended and then pulling it toward your chest.

As your vortex mantis skills improve, you will be able to lure and project simultaneously. That will give you the ability to strike or pull with power and defend against an opponent regardless of whether his attacks are circular, angular or linear.

## Gyro Mantis

To get a feel for the gyro mantis, move your hands as though you were using them to pedal a bicycle. Breathe naturally and tilt the imaginary bicycle wheel to the right or left.

Feel your body follow the wheel as you lean toward the direction in which you are tilting. Once you feel the gyro working, try other experiments such as backward pedaling and pedaling at different angles. Try it on flat ground, uphill, downhill and around objects, varying your speed and rhythm. Use your body and footwork as wheels rotating in one direction and then the other. "Purposely fall out of balance and bring yourself back by acceleration," Moses says. "Stay fluid, adaptable and alert. Go with the flow."

The key benefits of gyro physics are acquiring equilibrium through velocity, creating additional centers and wheels outside yourself to improve your balance, and boosting your knowledge of leverage and perpetual motion. The gyro mantis applies to aikido and chin-na joint locks. For example, if you attempt to use a twisting wrist lock on an opponent and have trouble completing it, reverse the circle and lock him up by going in the other direction. If you start to fall, pivot your feet (creating a wheel or circle) to regain your balance.

If you are a judo player, you use gyro movements when you execute an o-goshi (hip throw). If you are a peace officer, you use them when you spin an uncooperative suspect to the ground. Many martial arts incorporate this element, yet it is rarely discussed.

"Many of the island arts tap into this type of flow primarily thanks to training with drums," Moses says. "What begins as one-two, one-two-three and one-two-three-four rhythms, through fatigue and familiarity eventually becomes acceleration points within circles which can be sped up or slowed down to achieve the desired effect. In kung fu, gyros can be seen often. The drunken-style in particular epitomizes the value of circular opposites, allowing the practitioner to wobble out of round then come back to center and into balance using circles and torque."



**In addition to teaching shadowboxing, the shadow mantis boosts the student's peripheral awareness.**



**To demonstrate a practical application of upstream mantis, Rob Moses (white pants) uses his "swimming hands" to stop his opponent's attack.**



**In a self-defense situation, the casting mantis can be used to throw an attacker like a fishing net.**

## Upstream Mantis

“Mantis swims upstream,” or upstream mantis for short, contains offensive and defensive components. It uses aqua dynamics to provide the feeling of water resistance to help you gain precision and purpose. To do it, pretend you are standing in a river facing the oncoming current. The faster the water, the more you have to lean into it. Use one hand to “swim” up and down and from side to side in the same way you stick your hand out of the window of a speeding car and “steer” it like a plane’s rudder. Then incorporate your other hand. Let one hand follow the leader, then switch to having both hands move in synchronization.

With practice, you will learn how to use these motions to redirect or block an attack, as well as to strike and check while you strike.

## Hurricane Mantis

The hurricane mantis is similar to the upstream mantis, but it weighs less and offers more volume control, Moses says. Like a bird that swoops, turns and rides the updrafts of a canyon, you become aerodynamic and absorb the effects of resistance and flow. As your senses become more tuned in, mentally increase the flow of the wind from a gentle breeze to a full-blown hurricane. The faster the wind, the more obstacles you may deal with. Then reverse roles and become the wind or the hurricane. Let your imagination run wild as you duck hubcaps, jump over logs, roll away from stampeding horses or fight off 100 attackers. As you deploy

## Philosophies of the Nine Palms

**Extreme flexibility:** Flexibility plays an important role in all martial arts. The more flexible you are mentally and physically, the fewer limitations apply to you. Splits, rotations and knee extensions help you achieve greater velocity through elasticity. By opening your range of motion, you can expand as a human being. Your imagination will be enhanced, and your blood flow improved. You will be ready to deal with the pains of life without overreacting.

**Extreme rhythms:** The rhythm of fatigue is the rhythm of mastery. This is discovered after many hours of training. In the beginning, your vocabulary of techniques may be very much like a square, but work long enough and eventually the corners will chip away. You will become simply too tired to make mistakes or use more effort than is necessary. Hand strikes and kicks will become straighter. You’ll use gradual acceleration to acquire power through alignment, mass and inertia. You will no longer drive with one foot on the brake.

**Extreme NOWism:** Nothing exists but the present. Put emotion into all aspects of your life: work, play, exercise, eating, driving. Play the keys of your computer with style—like a musical instrument. Enjoy everything.

Deal with it all as you move. Imagine that you see and hear better. Touch what’s not there. Taste your own mouth. Smell the roses in your mind. —Rob Moses, David your entire arsenal of techniques, there are no boundaries.

## Shadow Mantis

The shadow mantis helps your brain tune in to what may be taking place at your sides or behind you by increasing your peripheral awareness. A simple way to get started is to pretend you are fighting two people on the ledge of a tall building. While grabbing the hair of the person to your right, you elbow-smash the other attacker or reach down and grab a pant leg of each attacker and send them sprawling off the building. The shadow mantis can also provide the obvious benefit of shadowboxing, in which you use your reflection to polish your moves when no partner

is available.

## Empty Mantis

The expression known as the empty mantis involves gathering and releasing intangible objects. It is similar to the popular “holding the ball” tai chi exercise. Start by making your hands “swarm” around an imaginary basketball. To avoid becoming overly rigid, move around and vary the size of the ball. Envision two objects, one in each hand. Spherical wonderment and tangible nothingness are great treasures because with them comes the ability to elevate your soul above ego or selfishness, Moses says. A sound and healthy mind is the result, he adds.

## Implosion Mantis

The implosion mantis was devised to help you develop a sense of depth during the transmission of energy and during the creation and elimination of mental projections—in other words, to send chi instead of hoarding it. These energies and projections can add power to your attack or nullify an incoming blow. A more advanced aspect of the implosion mantis makes you aware of and responsible for the outcome of your action or inaction. Whether you fight or fail to act when fighting is justified, you must be ready for the physical and psychological fallout—the implosion, so to speak.

“Like all the rest of the nine palms, the many ways to apply yourself are endless,” Moses says. “Applied wonder makes any art your own.” Adds Carradine, “Kung fu is anything you want it to be— it can be a place to lose yourself and find yourself—so turn it on and give yourself a real thrill.”

For more information about nine-palms praying mantis kung fu, call (805) 654-0461.

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