



Klamath Network Featured Creature

July 2013

Western Rattlesnake Plantain (*Goodyera oblongifolia*)

General Description: Western rattlesnake plantain (*Goodyera oblongifolia*) is a perennial monocot in the family Orchidaceae. Despite its common name that would suggest relation to plantain, western rattlesnake plantain is actually an orchid. Physically, the plant has 3-10 cm oblong leaves at ground level with a flowering shoot that grows 20-45 cm tall. Dark green in color, the leaves have a central white stripe that can have a cracked looking pattern spreading out from it on some plants. Western Rattlesnake Plantain sends up its stalk and blooms during the summer between June and September, producing small (5-10 mm) green and white nectar containing flowers in a spiral pattern, a favorite of bumble bees. These orchids have a symbiotic relationship with a fungus that allows them to frequent acidic and nutrient poor soils.



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Image from <http://plants.usda.gov>



Image from wanativeorchids.com

Reproduction: Western rattlesnake plantain have creeping rhizomes and fibrous root systems; the plant can reproduce rapidly by asexual vegetative multiplication, giving rise to clustered colonies of cloned plants that are sometimes observed. The western rattlesnake plantain also reproduces sexually via wind-dispersed seeds.



Image from
<http://wanativeorchids.com>

Distribution and Habitat: The range of western rattlesnake plantain extends from Alaska down to California and east to the Rockies, typically in coniferous forests. Western rattlesnake plantain can be found growing on mossy or humus-rich soils in coniferous forests of Crater Lake and Lassen Volcanic National Parks, Redwood National and State Parks, Oregon Caves National Monument, and Whiskeytown National Recreation Area.

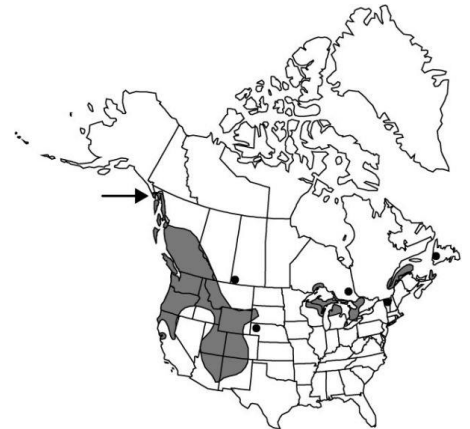


Image from <http://efloras.org>

Ethnobotany: Early settlers named western rattlesnake plantain because of its resemblance to plantain (*Plantago major*) and the white “rattlesnake” pattern on the leaves. Historically the plant was used medicinally by the Okanagan-Colville and coastal Salish Indians as a poultice for cuts and sores, a tonic tea, and a soak for sore muscle relief.

For More Information:

www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/forb/gooobl/all.html