

NOTES
on
THE ETHNOBOTANY OF THE THOMPSON
with
ADAPTATIONS TO THE FLORA OF SOUTHERN IDAHO

COMPILED
by
EDWIN H. KELLER
Ranger Naturalist

CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT

1963

The Ethnobotany of the Thompson Indians of British Columbia

Based on field notes by James A. Teit.

Extract from the forty-fifth annual report of the Bureau of American Ethnology. 1930. Edited by Elsie Viault Sledman.

The Thompson Indians are one of the Salishan tribes who occupy large portions of the interior of British Columbia and of the States of Washington, Idaho and Montana. In fur trading days they were known as "Couteau" or "Knife" Indians.

Plants used for foods--Roots

Lewisia rediviva Bitter-root.

The thick fleshy taproot is eaten. An item of trade. The roots were cooked to reduce bitterness.

Cirsium edule Thistle (also undulatum)

The large roots are cooked before eaten.

Cirsium hookerianum Thistle

The thick deep root is cooked before eating.

Osmorhiza sweet root or sweet cicely. The thick aromatic roots are eaten. They are known for their delicate flavor and are especially appetizing because of their aromatic character.

Opuntia polyacantha Prickly pear.

The small bulbs and roots are eaten. They are best when gathered in the spring. They are cooked in an earthen oven then they are peeled, and the inside eaten. The inside of the growing stalks or growing parts are also eaten in the same way.

Balsamorhiza sagittata Balsam root.

The roots are eaten and sometimes the whole plant. The Indians enjoy the whole plant, when young but will eat it at any age when hungry.

Hydrophyllum occidentale waterleaf.

The root is always cooked before eating. Cattle commonly eat this plant.

Lithospermum angustifolium Stone seed.

The name means bloody in Indian language and growwell is another common name. The tips of many of the roots are red. The roots which are large and deep rooted are cooked before eating.

Potentilla anserina Silver weed.

These roots form a part of the Indians diet, raw or more often cooked.

Underground Stems

Manisium quamash Camas.

This is one of the most valuable native edible bulbs of the Indian of the Pacific Coast. It is sweet and nutritious; very abundant and larger than many of the other bulbs. It is always cooked as it is very insipid when eaten raw. After baking it resembles a chestnut in appearance and taste. It is a favorite food of the Indians, being eaten by those of California, Oregon and the northwestern plateaus. In some cases it is mixed with a dark thread like lichen. (*Alectoria jubata*).

Fritillaria lanceolata. Yellow bell. Rice root. They bear bulbs of small rounded scales that make good food. The thick scaly bulbs are cooked before eating. The Thompson Indians eat the bulbs. The first to be dug in the spring.

Allium spp. onion.

The thick lance ovoid bulb, often purplish in color, is eaten after cooking. The plant is very abundant. The bulbs of all species are eaten. Its volatile oil gives it a very strong scent. The tall and prairie onions are seldom eaten.

Scirpus sp. Bulrush.

The thick fleshy root stalks of one species were baked and eaten. It is called "tule" in the Pacific States.

Erythronium grandiflorum Dog-tooth violet, glacier lily, fawn lily.

The corms are eaten cooked. They are a little larger than a peanut.

Pteridium aquilinum Bracken fern. The root stock is cooked and eaten.

It is considered very nutritious.

Claytonia lanceolata spring beauty.

The corm, which is small and oval is eaten. It is sometimes called Indian potato.

Typha latifolia cat-tail, broad leaf.

The farinaceous rootstalks forms an important part of the Indians diet.

It seldom is eaten by white man.

Calochortus macrocarpus Sagebrush mariposa (compares to Sego)

The coated starchy corms are eaten by both Indians and whites. The plants are very abundant all along the Pacific Coast.

Sium laeve water parsnip. sauve in Idaho.

The rootstalk or rhizome is the part eaten. Cattle often eat this plant. The plant grows in water with the leaves submerged; then they twice or thrice pinnatifid.

Stems above ground, leaves, and flowering tops

Rubus spectabilis Salmon berry

The young shoots are very fleshy and sweet and are eaten whenever they can be found.

Heracleum lanatum cow parsnip

The young stalks are pulled, peeled and eaten raw. They resemble our rhubarb but are not so succulent and are much more fibrous. Cattle eat them.

Calochortus macrocarpus (Sego) Sage brush moriposa.

The flower buds are eaten and are very sweet due to nectar glands. Often the unopened flowers are picked and eaten raw.

Pinus contorta Lodgepole pine.

The Indian name means "cambium layer". This cambium layer and the sap of the pine are eaten especially in the spring when they are most abundant.

Pinus ponderosa-yellow pine.

The Cambium layer was removed in the spring and eaten. Young twigs were also eaten.

Picea sp. spruce The Cambium is eaten.

Pseudotsuga menziesii Douglas fir.

The Cambium is eaten.

Populus tremuloides Quaking aspen. The Cambium is eaten

Alnus rubra Alder. The Cambium is eaten.

Epilobium angustifolium Fire weed.

The Indian name means "leaf", "stalk". The young shoots are eaten raw.

Scirpus sp Bulrush

The pollen and flowering spikes were occasionally eaten. Children in the country delight in eating this when they find it.

Abies sp. Fir. Indian name meaning "tree milk".

The fir trees have great quantities of resin which is exuded from the needles, cones, and branches. It congeals and these makes of gum, very sweet and pleasing to the taste, are collected and chewed. After chewing awhile it is swallowed. This gum is enjoyed by the white man.

Opuntia sp Cactus-Prickley pear.

The stems were peeled, and either baked in ground ovens or steamed.

Balsamorhiza sagittata-Balsam root, miles ear.

The Indian name refers to the young stalks with leaves. They are eaten raw but are often boiled. The root bear a thick edible crown which is cut off and chewed or sucked by the Indians. The young stems are a favorite Indian food. The stalks are soaked in water for twenty four hours before eating. They were peeled and eaten raw.

Trigonotis porrifolia Goats beard (salsify) vegetable oyster (purple flower)

Some plants yield a latex which when exposed to air coagulates, and the Indians chew this mass. The plant is broken at the base of the stem. The sweet milky juice exudes and dries in a lump. It is chewed and later swallowed. The roots can be cooked and eaten.

Fleshy Fruits, Berries, Drupes

Crataegus douglasii Haw tree

The drupe-like pome is eaten. It is black and smooth. Another species is recognized by the Indians. These fruits are also eaten by white men.

Artostaphylos uva-ursi Bearberry.

They are eaten fresh and sometimes boiled in soups. The drupes are bright red.

Rubus spectabilis Salmonberry.

The fruit a raspberry is eaten. This is also a favorite of white man.

The better flavored bear salmon-yellow fruits.

Pyrus sitchensis Mountain ash.

The small bright red berries which grow in long clusters are occasionally eaten.

Vaccinium oreophilum Whorlberry

The small black nodding berries are eaten.

Rosa sp. Wildrose-Fruit berry like the hips are used for food, and strung, for bead by the children

Ribes sp. currants

The fruits are eaten cooked or raw.

Vaccinium spp. Huckleberry

This plant bears sweet berries sometimes with a bloom. They are much gathered by the Indians.

Fragaria sp. strawberry

This wild strawberry is one of their favorite fruits. Some large berries have been naturalized from Europe.

Cornus stolonifera Red osier dogwood

The drupes are whitish or lead colored. They are not used very much as food as they are rather bitter.

Berberis aquilifolium Oregon grape (tart berry)
The berries are globose, a purple black with a white bloom. They are very acid.

Amelanchier sp. Service berry.
The drupes are part of the Indian's diet and very sweet. They are gathered and cured for keeping.

Sambucus sp. Elderberry
The drupes are part of the Indians diet.

Symphoricarpos sp. Snowberry
The fruits are very attractive in appearance. They are a globular, white and larger about a quarter of an inch in diameter. They are called "dead people's berries" or berries of the dead as they are thought to be poisonous and fatal if eaten in numbers.

Prunus demissa -chike cherry
The dark purple drupe is used by the Indians as part of their diet. The fruit is sweet but slightly astringent.

Nuts and Seeds

Balsamorhiza sagittata-Balsam root
The ripe seeds (which are enclosed in the fruit, an achene) are often eaten raw. The seeds are sometimes pounded in a mortar and the flour mixed with other foods. After cleaning them they may be prepared still another way. They are put in a basket with deer's fat or grease and boiled with hot stones, then allowed to cool. The cooled mass is made into small cakes and eaten.

Pinus ponderosa-Yellow pine
The seed which are fairly good size, are eaten, but not in great quantities. The seeds of reasonable size of any pine afford a great supply of food for the Indian as well as the white. They are commonly called "nuts".

Many are of considerable size as that of the
Pinus monophylla single leaf pinon or pinyon and nutritious, being rich in oil.

They are often bitter if eaten raw, so they are usually roasted.

Pinus albicaulis Whitebark pine
The distribution for this tree is limited. It is a scraggly tree with white bark. Its cone bears large edible seeds which is a favorite of the Indians. The seeds were often cooked in ovens or roasted over the fire. They were sometimes preserved for winter use by cooking, crushing, and mixing with dried service berries. They were kept dry in sacks until needed.

Helianthus sp. Sunflower. (Introduced)
The seeds of the sunflower were eaten in quantities. They were not native to this area.

Plants and parts of plants chewed

Antennaria sp. Everlasting, Pussy-toes. Indian meaning "cough or cold"

Hieracium sp. Hawkweed

Indian meaning--"chew or thing for chewing plant"

Tragopogon sp. Salsify-vegetable oyster

The base of the stem is broken and a sweet milky juice is exuded. When dry, it is chewed with great enjoyment by the Indians.

Erigeron sp. Fleabane daisy.

The whole plant is dried and chewed mainly as a remedy for sore throat.

Balsamorhiza sagittata Balsam root

The part of the stem from which the stem grows is cut away and sucked and chewed. It is said to relieve hunger.

Pinus monticola White pine

The trunk and branches of this tree exude a gummy substance which is collected and chewed.

Nonmedical drinks

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi Bearberry

The leaves and young stems are just brought to a boil or merely immersed in boiling water and drink as a tea.

Geum triflorum-Avena

The roots are boiled and drunk as tea. Indian name signifies "hair of head"

Rosa sp. Rose (wild)

A tea is made by boiling the young leaves and stalks

Pentstemon confertus Beardstongue

A tea is made by boiling the dried leaves and stems. Where to be used as a tea care must be taken not to boil the drink too long. If boiled too long, it acts as a purgative.

Potentilla glandulosa Cinquefoil

A tea may be made by boiling the whole plant or just the leaves. It is a slight stimulant.

Pseudotsuga menziesii Douglas fir

A drink is made by boiling the young twigs with their leaves. It has tonic properties.

Juniperus communis Common juniper

A drink is prepared by boiling the stems and leaves.

Plants used for Smoking

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi Bearberry.

The leaves are dried and toasted and used as a kinnikinnick with tobacco in smoking. The plant is named by the Indian to mean "berry of the kinnikinnick". The leaves are preferred by the Indian any other as an addition to tobacco leaves.

Valeriana sylvatica, sitchensis Valerian

Both the roots and the leaves are dried and powdered and a small portion mixed with the tobacco as a flavoring, some men always use it; others never use it.

Rosa sp. Wild rose

Leaves and bark are dried, toasted, powdered, and smoked. Their use as a kinnikinnick, however, is occasional. It is more often used as a drink.

Nicotiana glauca-tobacco

The leaves of this plant are the most important source of tobacco. They are dried and toasted before being smoked. They are often greased to keep the leaves from getting too dry. Leaves of the bearberry are usually dried, toasted and mixed with them.

Cornus pubescens Red Osier Dogwood

The leaves were smoked but not to any great extent.

Vaccinium ovalifolium-Huckleberry

The leaves of these and several other kinds of *Vaccinium* are used as a kinnikinnick.

Plants used as Scents

Mentha canadensis Wild mint.

Due to the many oil glands in the stem and leaves, this plant is very fragrant and is one of the most extensively used plants for scents.

Alnus rhombifolia Alder Indian naming "thick tree"

The stems are slightly fragrant and are sometimes used as a scent.

Other plants used by the Thompson Indian were sweet grass, mountain rhodendron, streptopus, and Jerusalem oak.

Poisonous Plants -- Indian name-Berries of death

Symphoricarpos albus-Snowberry

The berries are never eaten. They are considered deadly poisonous if more than two or three are eaten.

Veratrum Californicum-false hellebore

The plant is generally considered poisonous if eaten in large quantities.

It is used medicinally but the decoction is taken in small doses or the patient will be poisoned.

Actea arguta and eburnea. The red and Ivory bone berry.

A decoction of the roots is drunk as a medicine but in very small doses as it is poisonous. Some people cannot stand the full-strength dose and have to have a decoction prepared which is very weak.

Zygadenus elegans. Death camas.

The bulb is the part which causes human poisoning but the leaves are usually fatal to cattle and sheep. Dizziness, nausea and profuse vomiting are the usual symptoms. If a person fails to vomit freely death usually follows. The Indians avoid eating the bulb, or root as they call it, at this point. The root mashed and applied externally is effective in relieving and reducing inflammation.

The bulb of this plant is very similar in size and shape to that of the true camas (*Quamosia*) which is a most highly esteemed food plant.

Artemisia dracunculoides Sagebrush-wormwood-sage

This is very important medicinally but it is said to be poisonous if it enters the blood. As it is applied externally, there is often danger that it may cause blood poisoning.

Ceanothus sanguineus Ceanothus-Snowbrush

This plant is known by all Indians for its strong smell. They do not say it is poisonous but they never use it.

Ranunculus glaberrimus Buttercup

This is one of the first plants to blossom in the spring. The flowers alone or sometimes the whole plant are washed and rubbed on arrow points as a poison. Species *scleratus* is sometimes used may also be used for this purpose. Other buttercups are described as round leaf, fringed leaf and serrated leaf.

Juniperus scopulorum Rocky Mountain Juniper

A strong decoction is made from berries and used to kill ticks on horses.

Juniperus occidentalis Western Juniper

The decoction, which is used as a remedy for syphilis, is a powerful and dangerous medicine as it is poisonous if made too strong or taken in too large doses.

Asclepias speciosa Milk-weed

The root is poisonous unless small amounts are taken.

Cicuta vagans-Water hemlock

Roots of this plant are known by most Indians to be poisonous to both man and animals. Some say they have eaten the roots after first drinking oil. Pains and vomiting followed but in three days all ill effects had disappeared and they felt better than ever before. If a person trying this treatment should omit the oil death would result.

The plants of the original paper were reduced. Only those that were considered native to Idaho are listed.

Compiled by Edwin H. Keller, 1963.

Notes

on

THE ETHNOBOTANY OF THE NAVAJO

with

ADAPTATIONS TO THE FLORA OF SOUTHERN IDAHO

COMPILED

by

EDWIN H. KELLER
Ranger Naturalist

CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT

1963

ETHNOBOTANY OF THE NAVAJO

Francis H. Elmore

University of New Mexico
Santa Fe, New Mexico

1944

Juniperus, spp. - Indian name (no meaning)

The two parts of the fire drill used in the night chant must come from a juniper tree which has been struck by lightning. Some light bark from the same tree is used as tinder to catch the sparks from the fire drill. The bark must be shredded from the tip to the butt.

Phragmites Communis - Common Reed Grass or Carrizo

The reeds were made into prayer sticks.

Panicum Capillare - Witchgrass

The Navajo eat the seeds of this plant.

Allium - Wild Onion

The desert onion is eaten by the Navajo who think the mountain variety is poisonous. They rub the bulbs in hot ashes to singe them, as well as to remove some of the strong taste from them. After this, they are either eaten immediately or dried and stored for winter use. The bulbs are also soaked in water.

Calochortus Nuttallii - Sego Lily

The Navajo gather the bulbs of this plant in early spring, peel and eat the bulbs raw. It is a children's food because the children eat the bulbs while playing.

Sysyrinchium, spp. - Blue-eyed Grass

For nose and throat troubles, the dried and pulverized herbs are used with aster, euphorbia, zinnia, etc.

Populus - Cottonwood

Because of its soft wood, the cottonwood is used for dice, loom poles, prayer sticks, tinder boxes, fire by friction sticks, fiber tinder, summer shelters, game implements, and parts for Navajo cradle.

Zygadenus Venenosus - Death Camas

Poison

Iris Missouriensis and Iris, spp.

The plant is used for making a green dye.

Celastrus Reticulata - Hackberry

The berries are ground and eaten; the leaves are boiled with twigs to dye wool red or brown; the wood is used for bellows tubes.

Eriogonum, spp. - Wild Buckwheat

When the roots are put into cold water, the water has a somewhat sweetish taste. An unidentified species has red roots and is used for diarrhea. The root of this plant is used to relieve pain when a person is hurt. When ants are swallowed, the species rotundifolium is taken to make one vomit. It is smoked with tobacco.

Atriplex, spp. - Saltbush

A wound made by stings of ants, bees, and wasps is treated by chewing the plant and then, placing it on the swelling. It is used as a forage plant for cattle, sheep and goats, and it makes a good winter forage for sheep.

Chenopodium Album - Lambsquarter; Pigweed

Large quantities of the plant are eaten raw. The young tender plants are collected by the Navajo and boiled as herbs--alone or with other foods. The chopped-up plants are spread on the face and arms to keep flies and mosquitoes from biting one. The seeds of the plant are also put to use. A stiff porrage can be made of the seeds; likewise, bread is sometimes made from the seeds.

Eurotia Lanta; Diots Lanta - Pursh; Winter Sage; Winter Fat; Jack Rabbit Food

After slightly boiling the leaves, this plant is eaten to relieve blood spitting.

Sarcobatus Verniculatus - Greasewood

The wood of this plant is very hard. The plant is used as firewood by the Navajo. In winter, it is used as a forage for sheep--they eat it for salt. And too, it is used for planting sticks, Navajo dice, knitting needles, and the handle of the distaff used in weaving. The plant is sometimes chewed and then applied to an injury caused by ant, bee and wasp stings.

Amaranthus, spp. - Red Root; Pig Weed; Spreading Pig Weed

The Navajo ground the seeds of this species of amaranth and used the resulting meal as food. By chewing handfuls of the meal made from the parched seeds, the Navajo obtained a sugar. A stiff porridge is frequently made from the seed meal; a gruel is made by mixing the seed meal with goat's milk. After being boiled, the plants are eaten (much as we boil and eat spinach). Sometimes the plants are boiled and fried in lard or just boiled and canned; other times the leaves and seeds are mixed with grease and eaten.

Clematis Lingusticifolia - Western Virgins Bower

The root is used for medicine when someone gets hurt or as a tonic after deliverance.

Delphinium Scaposum - Larkspur

It is said that a blue dye is obtained from the petals of this larkspur. The pollen is used extensively in many ceremonies. Since blue is the color sacred to the South, a bicolor (the powdered petals of this plant and of the delphinium) is used by the medicine men in their rites as a sacrifice to the South.

Thalictrum Fendleri - Meadow Rue

On the fifth night after the Blackening Ceremony of the War Dance, the men and their wives bathe in, and drink a tea of meadow rue.

Berberis Fremontii - Desert Barberry or Holly-grape

The roots and bark of this plant are used to dye buckskin yellow.

Berberis Repens - Oregon Grape

It is said that runatic stiffness is cured by drinking a tonic made from the boiled leaves and twigs of the Oregon Grape.

Draba Montana - Whitlow Grass

Diuretic troubles are supposed to be cured by drinking a beverage prepared from plants such as this.

Sisymbrium Officinale - Tansy Mustard

Before the seeds can be used, they have to be parched in a pan or skillet over live coals. Formerly, the seeds were placed in a basket with live coals and shaken until they were parched. After the seeds had been parched, they were ground and made into a soup or stew. Horses and sheep forage on the plants.

Cleome Pinnata - Princes Plume

This plant is used as a medicine for glandular swellings.

Cruciferae, sps.

The leaves of this unidentified species are pounded into a paste and applied to the cavity of an aching tooth. It is said that it will stop ordinary toothache very quickly.

Cleome Serrulate - Bee Plant

When the plants are about four inches high, they are picked and boiled much as we do spinach. The plants are combined with wild onion, wild celery (*Cymopterus Glomeratus*), and bits of meat or a little tallow to make a stew. Morsels of bread are then dipped into the stew and eaten. The young plants are also boiled, pressed out three times, rolled into balls and eaten, or they are dried and stored for the winter. The Navajo say that guaco has saved them from starvation on many occasions. The pods of the plant are also eaten.

Heuchera Bracteata - Alum Root

For toothache medicine, a mush is prepared by using the crushed leaves of this plant and the crushed leaves of *Aplopappus*.

Fragaria Bracteata - Strawberry

Although the fruits of this species are somewhat small, they have a very good flavor. The Navajo consider them a delicacy.

Cercocarpus Montanus - Mountain Mahogany

The roots and bark are used for stomach troubles while the whole plant is browsed by sheep. Because its seeds are white, it can be used for prayer sticks. White is the color of the east.

Ribes, spp. - Wild Currant; Wild Gooseberry

Amelanchier Alnifolia and Prunifolia (Rosaceae) - Serviceberry

The fruits are eaten fresh, or they are dried and preserved for winter use. The fruits are tasteless in all species.

Prunus Demissa - Chokecherry

The chokecherry is a very sacred tree to the Navajo. The fruits ripen black. Black is the color of the North.

Astragalus, spp. - Loco

If eaten, it is thought that it will kill flies and humans, while some plants will cause blindness.

Glycyrrhiza Lepidota - Wild Licorice

A plant which adheres as a burr.

Lupinus Breviceaulis - Short Stem Lupine

It is supposed to be a remedy for sterility and to especially favor the production of female offspring.

Lupinus Lyallii - Lupine (Lyall)

A linament is made of this plant and used as a remedy for boils.

Rhus Trilobata - Squaw Bush

The fruits are eaten as they come off the bush; the fruits are ground, sugar and a little water added to the fruit and eaten; the fruits are ground into a meal and eaten; the fruits are cooked with cornmeal to form a gruel and eaten. The old Navajo used the stems to make baskets.

Acer Negundo - Box Elder

The wooden tubes used for bellows are made of two pieces of box elder wood which has been hollowed out and placed together.

Ceanothus Fendleri - Snowbrush

A remedy for alarm and nervousness is made of this plant. The deer like to eat it for food.

Mentzelia, spp. - Blazing Star; Stick Leaf

Seeds of the *Mentzelia Albicaulis* were eaten.

Opuntia, spp. - Prickley Pear

The fruits of a number of species of prickley pears are eaten by the Navajos. The fruits are gathered by using a cactus picker (forked stick). The spines are removed from the fruits, the tunas are split and dried in the sun, and served as food in much the same manner as we serve dry fruit. The fruit is used to color wool pink; to make a cardinal dye, the fruit must be "dead" ripe.

Oenothera, spp. - Evening Primrose

The plant is used as a remedy for boils, and it is applied to the boil in the form of a liniment. An infusion of this plant is supposed to allay inflammation and cure burns.

Daucus Pusillus - Wild Carrot

The roots of this species are gathered in early spring by the Navajo who eat them raw or dry them for winter use.

Leptotaeneum Dissectum - Wild Parsnip

This plant is dried and ground up with plants of other species, and water is added to make medicine.

Asclepias, spp. - Milkweed

These plants can be eaten raw or boiled. The plants are also used for stomach troubles in general. The dried leaves are crushed between the fingers, and the resulting powder is stirred into a bowl of water.

Lithospermum Angustifolium - Stone Seed

It is chewed for coughs and colds.

Mentha, spp. - Mint

Monarda Fistulosa

This plant is put in cold water and applied to the head. This preparation cools the head and is supposed to relieve headaches.

Monarda Punctata - Horse Mint

Because the plant has such a pleasing odor, it is sometimes hung in the hogan.

Marrubium Vulgare - Horehound

A medicine plant. This plant is used as a tea for sore throat.

Lycium Pellidum - Matrimony Vine (Cultivated)

The fruits are eaten off the vine, or they are boiled into soup. They are picked in the summer, boiled to the right consistency, and spread on the rocks to dry. When dry, they are stored until winter, then eaten dried or made into soup. The flavor is rather flat.

Nicotiana, spp. - Wild Tobacco (Navajo Name is Raven Tobacco)

This plant is supposed to cure sores on the hands which were caused by handling or burning a crows nest.

Castilleja, spp. - Indian Paint Brush

By crushing the leaves of this plant and placing them in a bowl of water, a remedy for stomach trouble is made. Indian Paint Brush is used as a delicacy by the Navajo. They pull out the flowers and suck the honey from them. It is used as a remedy for stomach troubles in general.

Penstemon, spp. - Beardstongue

The leaves of this plant are pounded and used as poultices on rattlesnake bites. "This treatment is apparently an absolute antidote against rattlesnake poison." It is also made into a tea and drunk. Diuretic troubles were removed by beverages prepared from plants such as this.

Orobancha, spp. - Broom Rape

A linament made of the leaves and brachlets of this plant is employed in curing sores.

Symphoricarpos, spp. - Snow-berry

Viburnum, spp. - Marsh Elder

Campanula Uniflora - Harebell; Bluebell

The pollen is used in sacred ceremonies.

Achillea Millefolium - Yarrow

A universal tonic or remedy, known as a "life medicine", is applied in cases of "impaired vitality". A supply of the plant is kept in stock and carried on journeys for eventual use.

Aplopappus Lanuginosus

It is used as toothache medicine. One has to be very careful in using the medicine--putting it only on the hurting tooth. It is said that if it gets on the good teeth it eats them up.

Artemisia, spp. - Sagebrush; *A. tridentata*

These plants are sometimes used as stock food. It is a very soft convenient substitute for toilet paper. It is used as a remedy for headaches, and it is supposed to cure by odor alone. It is also used for colds and fevers. This plant is taken before long hikes and athletic contests and is supposed to rid the body of undesirable things which are lingering in the body. A drink made from this plant is used in the aid in deliverance of children. When this plant is boiled and drunk, it is supposed to act like epsom salts and cure stomach-ache.

Aster, spp. - Aster

The dried and pulverized herb is used as a snuff for nose and throat troubles.

Chriothamnus, spp. - Rabbit Brush

Some Navajos use this plant for chickenpox and measles. A number of unidentified species are used as yellow dye. A light orange dye is made by boiling the flowers with alum.

Erigeron, spp. - Fleabone Daisy

For a woman in travail, this plant is put in warm water and given the woman to drink as an aid to deliverance.

Gutierrezia, spp. - Snakeweed

The Navajos chew the plant and place the pulp on swelling caused by the stings of ants, bees and wasps. It is also supposed to heal wounds. The stems are used for whirls when making fire-by-friction. The tops are made into a yellow dye. The plant is said to be good for snake bite. When a sheep is bitten by a snake, this plant is ground and boiled and placed on the wound as a poultice. The swelling is said to go down immediately and the sheep cured.

Helianthus Annus - Annual Sunflower

The Navajo formerly cultivated the sunflower and mixed the seeds of the sunflower with corn. This mixture was then ground into a meal and made into cakes. Other uses: ceremonial, musical instruments, linament, etc.

Helianthus Nuttallii

The dried leaves are crushed between the fingers and stirred in a bowl of water and used as a remedy for stomach troubles.

Lactuca Scariola - Prickley Lettuce (Indian Meaning: Medicine, Rising in Tiers.)Lyodesmia Grandiflora and Rostrata - Wild Asparagus; Skeleton Weed

(Indian Name: Frog Food; Antelope Tobacco)

This plant is smoked when a Navajo becomes alarmed. By smoking this plant, the nerves of a person who has been suddenly frightened are quieted. Other use: Ceremonial

Senecio Danglasii - Groundsel

Indian name signifies (thorns for brushing). This plant is boiled and drunk to produce a good voice for chanting. The tops are used for brooms to brush the spines from cactus fruit.

Solidago, spp. - Goldenrod

The plant is used as incense. The flowering tops are mixed with Rumex (Dock) to obtain a yellow dye.

Sonchus, spp. - Sow Thistle (Indian Name Meaning: Medicine Rising in Tiers)Xanthium Canadense - Cockle Bur (Indian Name Meaning: Adhering)

A linament made of the Cockle Bur and applied under the arm pit is said to remove excessive perspiration.¹

¹Francis H. Elmore, A.A., A.B., M.S., Ethnobotany of the Navajo. Santa Fe, New Mexico: The University of New Mexico Bulletin with The School of American Research, 1944.

When we speak of a weed, we usually refer to some worthless and unwelcome plant, quite overlooking the fact that a weed in one locality may be regarded otherwise in some other place.

Many of our commonest wild plants, which every farmer and gardner regards as weeds, are very excellent food-plants with edible roots or fruits or with leaves which make salads or "greens".

The Colonists called the foods made of weeds, "Corn Salad".

Because so many of our weeds and wild plants are edible, do not assume that all those with tender shoots or tuber-like roots are good to eat. Many are poisonous, others are bitter or acrid and many peppery or hot.²

²A. Hyatt Verrill and Otis W. Barrett, Foods America Gave the World. Boston: L. C. Page and Co., 1958.

Notes
on
THE ETHNOBOTANY OF THE BLACKFOOT
with
ADAPTATIONS TO THE FLORA OF SOUTHERN IDAHO

COMPILED
by
EDWIN H. KELLER
Ranger Naturalist

CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT

1963

MEDICINAL AND USEFUL PLANTS OF THE BLACKFOOT INDIANS

by

Walter McClintock--1909

Ziellschrift fur Ethnologie--Berlin Heft 1909

Materia Medica of the Blackfoot

Balsam fir, sweet pine, *Abies losiocarpa*

Burned for incense, Poultices for fevers and colds in the chest also mixed in grease for hair oil and perfume. When grown in dry places it has a more concentrated and sweet odor. It is more fragrant than ordinary balsam. KATOYA

Double root, *Carum*--NITS-IK-OPA.

Used for sore throat and placed on swellings to draw out inflammation.

It is also eaten raw or boiled as a vegetable and used for flavoring stews.

Alum root, *Heuchera*--APOS-IPOCO.

It was pounded up and used wet as an application for sores and swellings.

Sour dock, *Rumex*--MATOA-KOA-KSI.

It was boiled and used for many complaints but generally for swellings.

Big turnip or Parsnip, *Leptotaenia*.

It is gathered in the fall, the root being used to make a hot drink as a tonic for people in a weakened condition and to make them fat. The root Wild parsnip was also pounded up and burned for incense. When horses had the distemper they were made to inhale smoke from this root. It was also mixed with brains and used in soft tanning. O-MUCH-KAS.

Purple Loco-weed--crazy weed *Astragalus*.

Loco was for sore throat also to allay swelling. Flowers may be blue, yellow or white. This plant is also called rattle-weed. A-SAT-CHI-T-AKE.

Hellebore--white--*Veratrum*. Snuff.

Found in mountain forests. The root is poisonous to eat. It was gathered by the Blackfoot both in the fall and in the spring and it was used for headache. They broke off a small piece of the root, which was very dry, and sniffed it up the nose. ET-A-WA-ASI.

Bane berry *actea*--Red and white.

The roots were boiled and used for coughs and colds. SIXA-WA-KASIM-SIXIMAS.

Sweet Sage--*artimesia frigida*.

The roots and tops were boiled and used as a drink for mountain fever. It was also chewed for heart-burn. Sage was also tied to articles

that were sacrificed to the sun.

Oregon grape--Berberis--OTSUE-KINA.

The roots were boiled and used for stomach trouble, also for hemorrhages.

Paper leaf alder--Alnus tenuifolia.

Red mouth bush--A-MUCH-KO-IYATSIS.

A hot drink was made of the bark and eaten for scrofula. The bark split readily and was also used for making stirrups, which were covered with raw-hide. The above Indian name originated because it was observed that when people chewed the bark it colored their mouths red.

Wild rose, Rosa-Rose berries-hips.

The Blackfoot boiled the root and gave it to children for diarrhea. The fruits were some times eaten raw. APIS-IS-KITSA-WA.

Ground cherry, Solanium-triflorum.

The berries were boiled and given to children for diarrhea.

Dog Bane-apocynum--NUKAPIST.

A drink was made by boiling the root in water and taken for a laxative. It was also used as a wash to prevent hair falling out.

Beardstongue, fire taste-Pentstemon.

It was named AT-SI-POA-KOA because of its biting flavor. It was boiled in water and taken internally for cramps and pain in the stomach. It was also used to stop vomiting.

Juniper-Red cedar-Juniperus scopulorum.

SIX-IN-OKO. The berries were made into a tea to stop vomiting. The juniper was on the altar of the sacred woman at the Sun Dance.

OPET-AT-SAPIA. Snake weed--Gutierrezia.

The roots were used by medicine men in doctoring. Red hot stones were placed in water with the roots. Fumes arose from the steam.

E-SIMATCH-SIS EVERNIA VULPINA- A lichen that grows on pine trees. It was used as a yellow dye for porcupine quills. The quills were placed with the dye in boiling water. It was also used for headache.

SA-PO-TUN-A-KIO-TOL-YIS. Scouring rush--Equisetum.

The plant is boiled in water and used as a drink, for horse medicine.

AKS-PEIS--Gumplant, Grindelia squarrosa.

The root was boiled and taken internally for liver trouble.

E-SIMATCH-SIS, Dye. Owlclover-Orthocarpus.

Used for dyeing gopher skins red. The plants were pounded and then pressed firmly into the skin.

Tobacco

KA-KA-SIN Kinnikinick-Bearberry *Arctostaphylos Uva-ursi*.
The leaves which are thick and ever-green, were dried and used for tobacco. The berries were eaten raw and also used mashed in fat and dried.

Ceremonials

PONO-KAU-SINNI. Narrow leaf puccoon.
Lithospermum---The tops were dried and used for burning as incense in ceremonials.

A-PONO-KAUKI. Arrow leaf balsam root. *Balsamorrhiza sagittata*. The large leaves were used in roasting camas roots.

SO-YO-TOI-YIS or I-TA-PAT-ANIS *Carex* or Sedge.

The Blackfoot said it was the favorite grass of the buffalo and for this reason the medicine men tied it around the horns of the sacred Buffalo head used in the Sun Dance ceremonials.

Wild berries and vegetables used for eating.

OK-KUN-OKIN. Service berry--*Amelanchier*.

The Blackfoot used the berries in great quantities for stews, soups and meat. They also dried them for winter use. Violent pains often followed the eating of the raw berries.

HUKKEEP Chokecherry *Prunus demissa*.

Blackfoot say it does not ripen till later than the service-berry, generally September. They were used for soups, eaten raw and pounded up and mixed with meat. The bark was boiled and used internally in combination with roots of the Western sweet Acely and Northern Valerian.

MISS-IS-A-MISOI Buffalo-berry, Silver-berry *Elaeagnus argentea*. Oleaster Family.

This family also includes the introduced tree, Russian olive. The smoke of the wood smells bad therefore the name stink-wood. The berries were used for soup. The bark is very tough and made strong rope for tying skins and parfleches when rawhide was not at hand.

IM-A-TOCH-KOT Dog-feet, *Disporum trachycarpum*.
It bears yellow berries which are eaten raw.

PO-KINT-SOMO Cow parsnip. *Heraclum lanatum*.

In the spring the stems are eaten after roasting over hot coals. A stalk of the PO-KINT-SOMO was placed on the altar of Sun Dance ceremonial.

PACH-OP-IT-SKINNI. Spring-Beauty-*Clatonia lanceolata*. The Blackfoot dug them in spring for eating, preparing them for eating by boiling.

EK-SIK-A-PATC-API Smart weed, *Polygonum bistortoides*.
The root was used for soups and stews.

PESAT-SE-NEKIN wild onion, *Allium recurvatum*.
Eaten raw and also used for flavoring.

IKIA-IX. Bitter-root *Lewisia-rediviva*, State flower of Montana.

The Blackfoot believed it was a healthy food. They prepared it by boiling in water.

SAX-IXA-KITSIM Wild mint *Mentha* sp.

The leaves were placed in parfleches to flavor dried meat. It was also used to make tea.

MASS. Wild turnip, stone-seed *Lithospermum linearifolium*.

The roots were prepared by boiling and roasting.

O-MUCK-AI-IX-IX. Evening-primrose. *Oenothera* or *Onagraceae*.

The Blackfoot say the root has no flavor until dried. It was gathered in the fall and eaten raw.

MISS-ISSA. Camas *Camassia esculenta*.

The roots were gathered by digging in the fall after the blossoms had fallen. They were baked by placing in a deep hole with heated rocks, leaves and grass. A fire was kept burning on top of the ground. It was said to require two days and two nights to cook them thoroughly in this way.

Perfumes

AT-SINC-PO. Gros Ventre Scent-meadow Rue *Thalictrum occidentale*.

The berries were dried and placed in small buckskin bags for perfumery.

KATOYA. Balsam fir-*Abies lasiocarpa*.

The leaves had a delightful odor when confined to a buckskin bag. Sweet pine was also mixed with grease in making hair oil to add fragrance.

HAT-O-AT-SIM Dog fennel-Rayless Camomile *Matricaria Matricarioides*.

The blossoms were dried and used for perfumery.

Pieces of punk from the cotton wood tree, leaves of the Balsam poplar and the ring bone of a horse's leg were used for perfume.

Blackfoot Names for Flowers.

SIK-A-PIS-CHIS-White flower, Aster.

OTA-KAP-IS-CHIS-KIT-SIMA-yellow flower Arnica.

A-PIS-IS-KIT-Sa-WA Red Rose, Rosa.

A-SA-PO-PIN-ATS-Looks like a plume-anemone *globosa*, its name is derived from the appearance of the flower when it turns into cotton and resembles a soft, downy feather.

A-PO-NO-KAU-KI-Paper leaves, arrow leaf balsam root, *Balsamorhiza sagittata*. In hot weather its large leaves become very dry and resemble paper.

STO-A-KAT-SIS-Virgins Bower, *Atragene columbiana*. A vine, with a beautiful light blue flower, that trails along the ground and also climbs trees. The Blackfoot have named it Ghost's lariat because it catches people and trips them up unexpectedly.

Old Indian Trails, by Walter McClintock, Houghton Mifflin Co. 1923.

The plants in this paper have been reduced from the original lists to those that are considered native to Idaho and particularly Southern Idaho.

Notes

Compiled by Edwin H. Keller, Craters of the Moon, National Monument
1963, Ranger Naturalist.