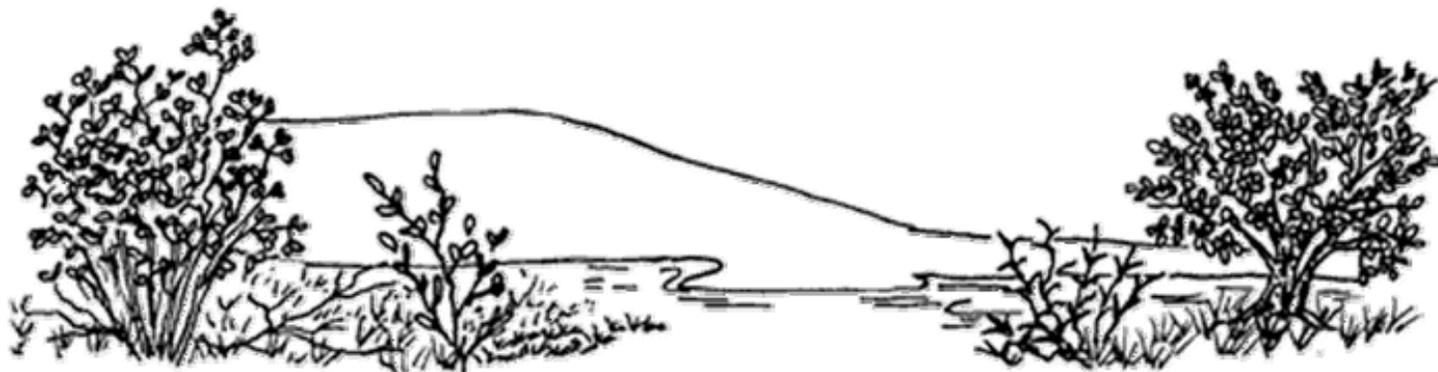




A Shrub By Any Other Name...



Blackberry *Rubus discolor*



Blackberry is commonly found along creeks, streams and in other moist areas. Vines are found near water, have three leaves, and berries that are sweet and edible. Blackberry is easily distinguished from poison oak by its sharp thorns. Poison oak may grow in blackberry thickets, so it is important to learn to identify both plants!

Poison Oak *Toxicodendron diversilobum*

Poison oak is commonly found in thickets and on wooded slopes. The resinous oils in poison oak produce a skin rash in individuals allergic to this plant. Poison oak is easily recognized by its leaves, which occur in groups of three at the end of the branch. It may grow as a small to medium height shrub, or as a vine along the ground or in trees. California Native Americans had a wide variety of uses for this plant. The supple, slender stems were woven into baskets. Fresh juice that turns black quickly was used for a dye in basketry. Fresh leaves tightly bound over a rattlesnake bite were thought to counteract the venom if applied immediately.



Yerba Santa *Eriodictyon californicum*



Yerba santa can be found at elevations up to 4,000 feet on dry mountain slopes and ridges. This plant has thick, leathery leaves coated in a waxy substance. They are generally dark green in color and have a white to light lavender flower. Yerba santa was named by the Spanish and means "Holy Weed." The leaves, either fresh or dried, were boiled to make a bitter tea, which was taken as a cure for coughs, colds, sore throats, and other ailments. A strong solution from boiled leaves eased sore and fatigued limbs.

Manzanita
Arctostaphylos spp.



Manzanita is common and is easily distinguished by its smooth red bark. The leathery leaves are about the size of a half-dollar coin, and the urn-shaped flowers are white to pink in color. The berries are approximately the size of a pea and resemble small apples when ripe, hence the name "manzanita," or "little apple" in Spanish. Spanish settlers gathered the green berries to make a soft drink or jelly. The California Native Americans generally used the berries only when ripe, or red in color. These berries were eaten fresh, and large quantities were dried and stored for winter use. The sweet pulp was powdered and used in a drink. The seeds were beaten into a flour and pressed into cakes and baked. A wash or lotion was made from the leaves as a cure for the inflammation caused by poison oak.

Chamise
Adenostoma fasciculatum

Chamise, or greasewood, is one of the most common shrubs of the California chaparral community. It inhabits mountain slopes and ridges. This plant has somewhat resinous heather-like foliage. The California Native Americans used an infusion of bark and leaves as a cure for syphilis. An oil yielded by this plant was also used for skin infections.



Toyon
Heteromeles arbutifolia



Toyon is also commonly referred to as "Christmas berry" or "California holly." This plant can be recognized by its oblong, serrated, deep green leaves and its bright red berries. It inhabits rocky lower mountain slopes, foothills, and canyon bottoms. California Native Americans ground the berries as a source of meal. Tea made from the bark and leaves was used as a cure for stomach aches. The Spanish Californians put the fruit in a bag, sprinkled it with sugar, and then cooked it in a slow oven.

Ceanothus
Ceanothus spp.

There are 40 species of ceanothus native to California, many of which are cultivated for their ornamental leaves and flower-clusters. When viewed from afar, ceanothus resembles wild lilac. The flowers range in color from whitish-pink, to blue or purple. The California Native Americans used the seed as a food, and the flowers produced a fine lather when rubbed briskly on the skin. The leaves were used as tobacco, and the bark and roots as an astringent and tonic. The red roots also yielded a red dye. Ceanothus is still utilized for medical purposes. A blood coagulant and a tonic for coughs are derived from the plant.



Redbud
Cercis occidentalis

Redbud has green heart-shaped leaves. The large clusters of reddish-purple buds give the plant its name. The California Native Americans used the bark of young shoots for baskets. The bark, when crushed, resulted in a mild astringent used for treating diarrhea and dysentery. The buds were used in salads or made into pickles.



Mountain Mahogany
Cercocarpus
betuloides



This hardwood plant has short spur-like leaf-bearing branchlets. It has oblong, somewhat resinous leaves, which are white and slightly hairy underneath. The flowers are commonly solitary. California Native Americans used the wood to make fishing spears, arrow shafts, and pointed digging sticks. The inner bark was used for making purple dye. A tea used to cure colds was made of the outer bark. The young plant could be powdered, stirred into water, and used as a laxative. The Spanish Americans hung a branch on their bed to discourage bedbugs.