

6. Lemonadeberry



Berry photo Oman9978

Anacardiaceae – Sumac Family – *Rhus integrifolia*

Lemonadeberry is native to Southern California, and is abundant on coastal slopes, ravines, and canyons. It can survive with very little water and will regrow after a frost. It ranges 3 to 26 feet in height, and is very fast growing. The leaves on this evergreen shrub have a smooth appearance with a toothed edge, and have a paler underside. Lemonadeberry blooms in the winter and early spring, from February to May, and has small, fragrant, pinkish-white flowers that are tightly clustered together. The berries, which appear on the plant in summer, are sticky, reddish, and hairy. They are also in tight clusters at the ends of the twigs. Lemonadeberry can be confused with Toyon, another evergreen shrub found in coastal canyons and scrubland. The best way to differentiate the two is that Lemonadeberry has tightly clustered flowers and berries, and has flowers in the winter and berries in the summer. Toyon has loosely clustered flowers and berries, and has flowers in the summer and berries in the winter. Lemonadeberry also has a more rounded leaf than Toyon. Lemonadeberry fruit has a tart taste similar to lemons, which is where the plant gets its name. It's in the same family as Poison Oak, and allergic reactions may occur from skin contact with the sap. The mature fruit can be used to make a drink that tastes like lemonade, or the fruit can be sucked on directly from the bush, though the seed inside the fruit should not be swallowed as it can cause an upset stomach. Kumeyaay Indians used the berries to make a tea, dried them to eat later, or mashed them up and added them to soup. Tea can also be made from the bark or leaves that can help with urinary problems or diarrhea. Many bird species, including the roadrunner, enjoy eating the fruit of this plant, and it is valued by wildlife for food and cover.

7. Deerweed



Fabaceae – Pea Family – *Acmispon glaber*

This is a perennial herb that is native to California; it is also known as California Broom. It is found mostly on coastal slopes and in sage scrub and chaparral habitats in California. It is abundant in clearings and disturbed places, and is one of the first plants to appear in areas that have burned. It is known as a pioneer species in nature, because it helps to fertilize the soil with the help of nitrogen-fixing symbiotic bacteria. This then supports the growth of other plants. Deerweed is a green bush that grows to about 2 feet tall. It has yellow flowers and blooms from March until August. An interesting thing about it is that the flowers turn from yellow to red once they have been visited by a bee, which tells the bee to look for a fresh flower (bees see red as black). The fruit is contained in a pod with a couple of seeds. Many butterflies such as the Perisius Duskywing, Eastern Tailed Blue, and Avalon Scrub-Hairstreak use it as a host plant, and butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds use its pollen and nectar as a food source. Mule deer and other wildlife feed on Deerweed.

8. Mexican Elderberry



Adoxaceae – Muskroot Family – *Sambucus mexicana*

This deciduous tree or shrub is native to California, though it is found in other parts of North America and beyond. It lives in canyon, valley, and forest habitats, and can grow up to 25 feet tall, though it is often shorter. Mexican Elderberry blooms from March to May, and has yellow flowers and sweet, blue berries. Hummingbirds feed on the nectar from the flowers. Many different foods and medicines can be made from Mexican Elderberry. Native Americans would boil the bark, stems, and leaves to make a wash to help heal open wounds. They also made a tea to help control fevers. The berries can be made into wine or delicious jelly. Native Americans also fashioned arrows, flutes, and clappers from the wood of the dried stems. This plant was so important for making musical instruments that many tribes referred to elderberry as the "tree of music." This importance is also reflected in its genus name, as *Sambucus* is the name of an ancient stringed musical instrument.

9. **California Wild Rose**



Flower photo by Spedona

Rosaceae – Rose Family – *Rosa californica*

The California Wild Rose is a native shrub that is found in forest, woodland, and wetland habitats in California, Oregon, and Baja California. It grows naturally by creeks and seeps in San Diego County, and flowers profusely in the summer from May to August. Bees and butterflies feed on pollen and nectar from this plant. The plant grows in a spreading or straggling mound and thickets of roses can be forbidding places to enter because of the many prickles found on the stems. Birds use California Wild Rose thickets as a nesting place, and small mammals for cover. The prickles of the California Wild Rose are straight, which distinguishes them from the curved prickles of the Wood Rose. The plant has numerous leaves and showy white or pink flowers. The flowers are open-faced and generally flat. Like most roses, it produces rose hips or fruits, which contain yellow seeds. The rose hips remain on the plant during the winter, and are used by wildlife for food. The native Cahuilla tribe of California ate the rose hips raw or soaked them in water that they then drank. They also used the roots of this plant to make a tea to help with cold symptoms. Because of their high vitamin content, these rose hips were used during World War II to make tea, jellies, and sauces, at a time when it was difficult to get imported citrus fruits. The fruits had to be deseeded in order to be eaten, and the hairy seeds were usually discarded. Except by certain naughty English schoolboys, who would crush the dried seeds into “itching powder” that they would put down the backs of girls’ dresses. This was known as “rose hiping.”

10. Deergrass



Poaceae Family – Grass Family - *Muhlenbergia rigens*

This plant is native to Southern California. It is a perennial, fast-growing, native bunchgrass that blooms from May and June. Deergrass grows in grasslands and chaparral, and is common in moist meadows, seasonal creeks, and drainages. It has an extensive root system, which makes it a very useful plant for erosion prevention and stream bank stabilization. Does with fawns like to make beds on it, and flattened grass is a sign that deer have been resting on it. This plant is important cover for deer during fawning, and deer populations can go down if this plant becomes reduced in a habitat. Though animals do not usually eat mature Deergrass, some wildlife such as mule deer, desert cottontail rabbits, California ground squirrels do eat the young plants. Native Americans made coiled baskets from the long stems and seedstalks of Deergrass. They would cook food and carry water in the baskets. Each basket required over 3000 stalks, and it is thought that Native Americans cultivated stands of Deergrass to maintain a supply. They also used ground Deergrass seeds, along with corn meal, to make bread or mush.