

Common Uses of Native Plants

Trees

Soapberry (*Sapindus saponaria*) – Named soapberry because seeds create a lather when placed in water and agitated.

Netleaf Hackberry (*Celtis reticulata*) – The sweet, orange berries were eaten raw. The fruits were pounded into a pulp and eaten with fat or mixed with parched corn.

Arizona Walnut (*Juglans major*) – The kernels of the walnut are sweet but difficult to pry out of the shell.

One-seed Juniper (*Juniperus monosperma*) – The berries, although unappetizing, were eaten by Native Americans.

Singleleaf Pinyon (*Pinus monophylla*) – Pinyon nuts were (and still are) eaten raw or roasted.

Velvet Mesquite (*Prosopis velutina*) – Natives used mesquites extensively for food, fuel, shelter, weapons, tools, fiber, dye, cosmetics, and medicine.

Shrubs

Shrub-leaf Oak (*Quercus turbinella*) – Acorns were gathered for food. Acorns are also valuable forage items for birds and mammals.

Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos pungens*) – Berries and leaves were used in teas for an effective diuretic. Mexicans make jelly out of the berries.

Squawbush (*Rhus trilobata*) – Berries are quite tart, but edible. Native Americans dried the fruits for future use. The fruits were also used as an ingredient in pemmican. This shrub is named squawbush because Indian women used its stems more often than any other plant (except willows) in basket making.

Catclaw (*Acacia greggii*) – The flowers are sweet scented and attract a wide variety of bees, wasps, butterflies, and ants.

Wait-a-minute Bush (*Mimosa biuncifera*) – Similar to catclaw but has paired spines instead of single spines.

Desert Olive - (*Forestiera neomexicana*) - The Hopis further hardened the wood by firing and then used as digging sticks.

Buckbrush (*Ceanothus fendleri*) - The dried leaves occasionally were used for tea. Buckbrush is a very valuable forage plant for deer and elk.

Miscellaneous

Agave - Native Americans dug up the rosettes, trimmed off the leaves, and roasted the remaining chunks in rock-lined pits. Baked agave is a nutritious, sugar-rich source of energy.

Sotol (*Dasylirion wheeleri*) - Fibers from the tough leaves were used extensively for cordage, baskets, and sandals.

Soaptree Yucca (*Yucca elata*) - Rich in saponins, parts from this plant produce lather when agitated in water. Native Americans have sliced the stems and roots for shampoo and soap. The leaf fibers were used for weaving baskets, mats, sandals, and nets. The flowers, high in Vitamin C, were eaten.

Sacred Datura (*Datura meteloides*) - Various parts of this plant were used as a hallucinogen.

Snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*) - This plant was used by Hispanics and Native Americans in teas for rheumatism, malaria, and snakebite. This plant is toxic to livestock when consumed in large quantities.

Engelmann prickley pear (*Opuntia phaeacantha*) - Javelina depend on the pads for food and moisture. The mature fruits are eaten by many wildlife species including bear, javelina, coyotes, and packrats.