



KLAMATH-SISKIYOU SERPENTINES ANCIENT REFUGE FOR RARE PLANTS

The Klamath-Siskiyou Mountains of northwest California and southwest Oregon are the largest body of serpentine type rock in North America. This challenging and unusual substrate, coupled with the ruggedness, isolation, and great age of these mountains, gave rise to a spectacular flora that is peculiar to this corner of the world.

For a plant to thrive on serpentine soils it must be able to tolerate low calcium and high magnesium levels – the reverse of normal productive soils -- low nitrogen, and concentrations of heavy metals that are toxic to most plants.

Some plants that occur here in the Klamath-Siskiyou Mountains are only found on serpentine soils; other more adaptable plants can live on or off serpentine. The rarest plants in this area are found only on serpentine, and only in a small geographic area. Some examples of very rare and beautiful serpentine plants are Trinity buckwheat (*Eriogonum alpinum*), showy raillardella (*Raillardella pringlei*), Siskiyou fireweed (*Epilobium siskiyouense*), and Scott Mountain phacelia (*Phacelia dalesiana*). Just thirty miles north of this garden, near the town of Yreka, there grows a very rare serpentine plant listed under the Endangered Species Act – Yreka phlox (*Phlox hirsuta*).

