

# Traditional Food Plants of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde in the West Eugene Wetlands

## From Time Immemorial

Since time immemorial, Native Americans have resided in Western Oregon. Today, many of these tribes, including the Kalapuya, Molalla, Umpqua, Rogue River, Clackamas, Tillamook, some Shasta, and many other people from regional tribes are part of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. The West Eugene Wetlands are within the traditional homelands of the Kalapuya and a part of the vast expanse of lands regional tribes ceded to the U.S. Government in treaties between 1853 to 1855. After the treaties were signed, the tribes were relocated by the U.S. Government to the Grand Ronde Indian Reservation located 30 miles west of Salem, Oregon at the foothills of the coast range. Traditionally, the tribes utilized hundreds of plants for food, medicine, structures, weaving materials and more. The tending, harvest, and use of plants had (and continues to have) important roles in ceremonies, celebrations, and household use.

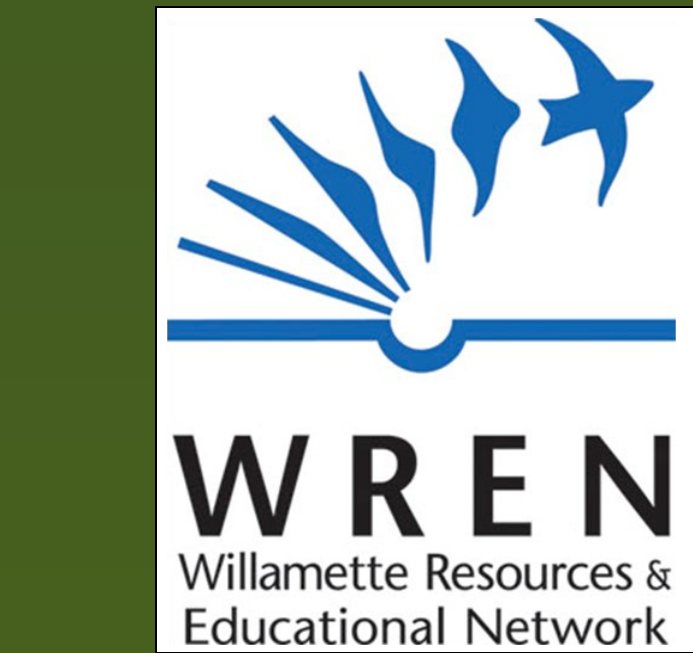
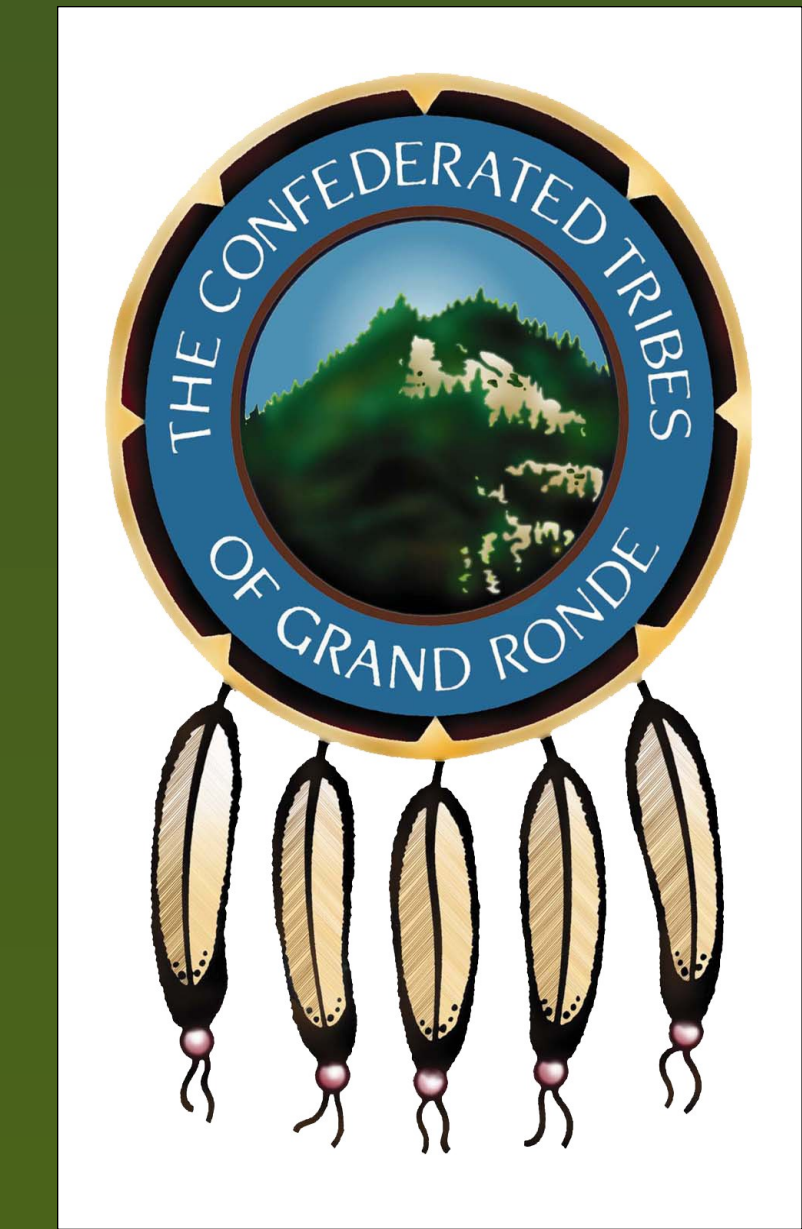
Today, tribal members face many challenges to gathering traditional plant resources due to pollution, the neglect of culturally important species, and the lack of access to sites suitable for sustainable harvesting. To address this problem Grand Ronde members are forming strategic public and private partnerships to help plan and implement projects to restore culturally and ecologically significant plants within their ceded homelands. The *West Eugene Wetlands Ethnobotany Resource Area Project* is an example of such an effort. The Grand Ronde along with other tribes in the region are developing restoration sites for plants such as those on this poster, as well as organizing educational and outreach events that feature basket weaving, story telling, canoe building demonstrations, and lectures on Native American history in the area.

## Traditional Foods

For thousands of years the Willamette Valley has provided a vast array of plant foods for the Native American people that live here. Many traditional foods can be found in the West Eugene Wetlands, a varied landscape of upland oak savannah, upland prairie, wetland prairie and riparian zones that host a great diversity of plants and animals. For example, tarweed (*Madia sp.*), grows on dry prairies, camas grows on wet prairies, hazel grows on dry semi-open or brushy areas, and the oaks grow in dryer zones. The Kalapuya used a variety of management techniques to improve food production systems. The maintenance of the traditional foods through tilling, digging and other activities helped maintain the varied landscape. Controlled fires were regularly set which had many benefits including keeping out unwanted competitor species and insects, and returning nutrients to soil.

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Camas in Bloom

### Camas

Small Camas - *Camassia quamash*  
Tall Camas - *Camassia leichtlinii*

**Habitat:** Wet meadows, wet prairies, swales, depressions, annual floodplains, moist hillsides, and streamside areas. Camas habitat is often ephemeral, drying out by late spring.

**Harvesting and Uses:** The camas is a highly valued traditional food source of all of the tribes in the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, including the Kalapuya of the southern Willamette Valley. Several varieties of camas were known to the Kalapuya people. Each Tribe had its own way of preparing the bulbs. The land was burned to enhance camas gathering areas throughout Western Oregon in pre-contact times.

Accounts by John Hudson, Santiam Kalapuya, Louis Kenoyer, Tualatin Kalapuya and Stephen Savage.

"Camas was baked in ovens lined with maple and ash leaves. On the leaves would be placed hot rocks and then the camas. And then they placed leaves on top of the camas and covered it with earth. They built a fire on top of the rocks, that's how they prepared the camas. They would cook it that way for three days...sometimes only two days." -John Hudson

"Tualatin women dug camas roots, they used a root digger. A big pile of them was made, and they steamed them two days (in a ground oven over hot rocks). They took them out from the ground, then they dried them (by a fire) to eat in wintertime." -Louis Kenoyer

"The Molalla used several varieties of camas. Molalla used a horn and clam as a digging stick. Camas cooked by the rock in a hole, the hot rocks were covered with leaves of skunk cabbage about two feet high. Then the camas was covered over with leaves again, then dirt, and on top a fire was built. Cooked about one day or more. For winter use the camas was dried after having been cooked. Dried in sun. Often camas was mashed and bread made of it." -Stephen Savage



Elegant Tarweed



Tarweed in Bloom at West Eugene Wetlands

### Tarweed

*Madia spp.*

**Habitat:** Open areas at low elevation.

**Harvesting and Uses:** Accounts by Louis Kenoyer, Tualatin Kalapuya, John Hudson, Santiam Kalapuya and Eustace Howard, Santiam Kalapuya.

"They beat tarweed seeds (into a rawhide bucket using a paddle), and they put them away for wintertime." -Louis Kenoyer

"They dried meat, and in wintertime they also ate hazelnuts, and acorns, and tarweed seeds, and dried berries." -Eustace Howard

"In summertime they picked tarweed seeds, and they dried them on the fire, and when they were done, then they put them away. Now long ago the people had a large rock which had a hole in its center (mortar), and they mashed their tarweed seeds in it. Sometimes they also mashed their cooked camas where they mashed the tarweed seeds. And when they were through, then the people ate what was mashed which they had pulverized. They mixed hazelnuts, and cooked camas, and tarweed seeds, and then they ate their cooked camas and their tarweed seeds and their hazelnuts." -John Hudson

"Eustace Howard said it is more like the soft-bag in technique of weaving, with it they prepared tarweed seeds. I do not quite well know what its name was. I do not know how they did it (wove it) when they manufactured them. But I myself only saw (some old ones used) when they prepared tarweed seeds (with them). They had them (they were made) rather like storage-baskets indeed (like the soft-bags, according to Howard)." -Kalapuya Texts



Oak Tree



Oak Tree Leaves

### Oak

Oregon White Oak - *Quercus garryana*  
Black Oak - *Quercus kelloggii*

**Habitat:** Pure, closed-canopy stands; in mixture with conifers or broad-leaved trees; and as scattered single trees or groves on farmlands, woodlands, and prairies.

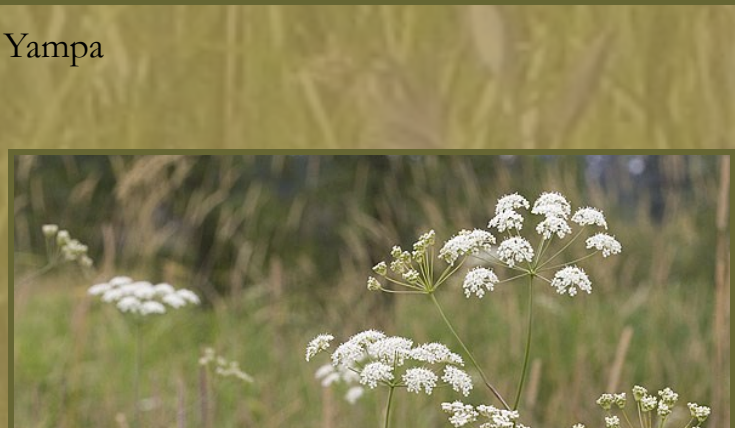
**Harvesting and Uses:** Accounts by John Hudson, Santiam Kalapuya and Stephen Savage, Molalla.

"They mixed with hazelnuts, and cooked camas, and tarweed seeds, they ate their cooked camas and their tarweed seeds and their hazelnuts." -John Hudson

"The acorn was buried in a blue kind of clay (mud) and kept there until ready for use. When fresh it was cooked in ashes." -Stephen Savage

"When acorns ripened on oaks, and when the acorns fell down, then the women would gather those acorns. They would pick up quantities, they would put them into their soft-bags, and they would take them back to their homes. Now then they would roast them in hot coals in the ground till they cracked. And then they would take them out, and now the acorns would be cracked. Then they put away its flesh. They dried the acorn's flesh. (They were laid in the sun either on the ground or on tightly woven rush mats). Now when they wished to eat, they had a small soft-long basket, and they put some of the acorns into it. Then they placed it (basket and acorns) in water to soak maybe one day and one night to remove the bitter taste. And then they took the acorns out of the water and they boiled them. They cooked, they ate it. That is what they did." -John Hudson

"The Clackamas steam roasted acorns in a pit oven until they cracked." -John Wacheno



Yampa Photo by Rod Gilbert

### Yampa

*Perideridia gairdneri*

**Habitat:** Low to middle elevations in dry to moist meadows and mossy or grassy slopes.

**Harvesting and Uses:** Yampa or "wild carrot" was gathered throughout the Willamette Valley. The roots were used for food and the leaves and seeds also had various uses. The roots were roasted, boiled, steamed, eaten raw or dried. If roasted they were dried, peeled, and cooked in a earth oven. The Tualatin Kalapuya had a location near Champoeq where yampa was gathered.



Yampa, Photo by Rod Gilbert



Evergreen Huckleberry



Salmonberry



Red Huckleberry



Salal

### Berries

Evergreen Huckleberry - *Vaccinium ovatum*  
Red Huckleberry - *Vaccinium parvifolium*  
Salmonberry - *Rubus spectabilis*  
Salal - *Gaultheria shallon*

**Habitat:** Found primarily in moist coniferous forests, openings.

**Harvesting and Uses:** A wide range of berries were gathered and eaten, including varieties of huckleberries (*Vaccinium* spp.), western blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), blackcap (*Rubus leucodermis*), thimbleberry (*Rubus parviflorus*), serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), elderberry (*Sambucus* spp.), strawberries (*Fragaria* spp.), and currants and gooseberries (*Ribes* spp.). Some were eaten fresh and others dried and stored for wintertime use. Other parts of the berry plants were also used. For instance, young shoots of the salmonberry plant were eaten and leaves from some of the plants were used to make tea.

Account by John Hudson, Santiam Kalapuya

"Long ago when the people (women) used to dry their berries, they would put some of them on mats over a (flat hevn) log, while they would place others on gunnysacks. Now they poured their berries over them (on the log or sack), (and) there their berries would become dry. And they would place others on logs, these logs they (the women's husbands) had chopped on top to make the log flat. Now there is where they (the women) always poured (spread out) their berries (to dry). The person who (the wife of the man who) had fixed (hevn) that log (flat on the top) was the one whose log it was, (because) he had fixed it. There they (the women) dried their berries. That is the way they always did it, when they went to the mountains for their berries. The men would go hunting, and the women would go to pick berries." -John Hudson



Wild Onion



Wild Onion



Wild Onion

### Wild Onion

*Brodiaea*, spp.  
*Allium* spp.

**Habitat:** Found in a variety of areas, but primarily in wet meadows, wet prairies, swales, depressions, annual floodplains, and moist hillsides.

**Harvesting and Uses:** A variety of species of *Brodiaea* and *Allium* were used by the Tribes. These include harvest brodiaea (*Brodiaea coronaria*), elegant brodiaea (*Brodiaea elegans*), fool's onion (*Brodiaea bozenthiana*, also called *Triteleia hyacinthine*), and slimleaf onion (*Allium amphiceras*). Some were taken around camas gathering time while others were gathered at other times of the year.

Account by Victoria Howard, Clackamas Chinook

"Meantime his older sister yonder (robin's) broke her root digger. She thought, 'Oh dear me! my younger brother! What happened to them (her brother and her child)? She went back home, she got back. He was weeping. She said to him, 'What is the matter?' 'Indeed you said to me, if she cries, then bake her. And that is what I did.' He showed her to her there. She said to him, 'I did not tell you to bake her. I told you to bake Brodiaea for her.'" -Victoria Howard



Hazel Tree Leaves

### Hazelnut

*Corylus cornuta*

**Habitat:** Found along stream banks and slopes. Usually occurs in non wetlands, but occasionally found on wetlands, low to middle elevations.

**Harvesting and Uses:** Accounts by Louis Kenoyer, Tualatin Kalapuya and John Hudson, Santiam Kalapuya.

"They gathered quantities of hazelnuts to eat in wintertime." -Louis Kenoyer

"They mixed hazelnuts, and cooked camas, and tarweed seeds, they ate their cooked camas and their tarweed seeds and their hazelnuts." -John Hudson

"They dried meat, and in wintertime they also ate hazelnuts, and acorns, and tarweed seeds, and dried berries." -John Hudson

"This countryside is not good now. Long, long ago it was good country (had better hunting and food gathering). They were all Indians who lived in this countryside. Everything was good. No one labored (at hard labor for wages). Only a man went hunting, he hunted all the time. Women always used to dig camas, and they gathered tarweed seeds. Such things were all we ate. They gathered acorns, they picked hazelnuts, they picked berries, they dried blackberries." -John Hudson



Mariposa Lily



Western Bistort



Desert Parsley



Pacific Crab Apple



Cattail

### More Traditional Food Plants...

Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum*)  
Wild Celery (*Oenanthe sarmentosa*)  
Ookow (*Brodiaea congesta*, *Dichelostemma congesta*)  
Western Bistort (*Polygonum bistortoides*)  
Cat's-ear, Mariposa Lily ( *Calochortus* spp.)  
Bare-stem Desert-Parsley (*Lomatium nudicaule*)  
Pacific Crab Apple (*Malus fusca*, *Pyrus fusca*)  
Choke-cherry (*Prunus virginiana*)  
Checker Lily - (*Fritillaria affinis*)  
Cattail (*Typha latifolia*)

## Habitat Types in the West Eugene Wetlands



Upland Oak Savannah

Upland Prairie

Wet Prairie

Riparian Zone